



East Cambridgeshire District Council

Meeting: Operational Services Committee

Time: 4:30 pm

Date: Monday 22 June 2026

Venue: Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE

Enquiries regarding this agenda: Patrick Adams

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Committee membership

Quorum: 5 members

Conservative and Independent Group members

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith
Cllr David Brown
Cllr Lee Denney
Cllr Martin Goodearl
Cllr Julia Huffer (Chair)
Cllr Lucius Vellacott (Vice-Chair)

Conservative and Independent Group substitutes

Cllr Anna Bailey
Cllr Lavinia Edwards
Cllr David Miller

Liberal Democrat and Independent Group members

Cllr Christine Colbert
Cllr Mark Inskip (Lead Member)
Cllr John Trapp
Cllr Ross Trent
Cllr Christine Whelan

Liberal Democrat and Independent Group substitutes

Cllr Lorne Dupré
Cllr Mary Wade
Cllr Alison Whelan

Lead Officer: Isabel Edgar, Director Operations

AGENDA

- 1. Public question time** [oral]
The meeting will commence with up to 15 minutes of public question time.
- 2. Apologies and substitutions** [oral]

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|---|-----------------|
| 3. 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. | |
| 4. Minutes | Page 5 |
| To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Operational Services Committee held on 23 March 2026. | |
| 5. Chair’s announcements | [oral] |
| 6. Community Safety Partnership Update | Page 15 |
| 7. Budget Outturn Report | Page 23 |
| 8. Register of Buildings of Local Interest | Page 29 |
| 9. Quarter 4 2025/26 Performance Report for the Waste & Street Cleansing Services | Page 33 |
| 10. Waste roll-out update – oral report | [oral] |
| 11. Long Term Empty Homes Strategy | Page 45 |
| 12. Annual Reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies | Page 97 |
| 13. Draft Minutes of Anglia Revenues Partnership for 17 March 2026 | Page 115 |
| To note the minutes of the Anglia Revenues Partnership meeting held on 17 March 2026. | |
| 14. Forward Agenda Plan | Page 125 |

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 Category 3 of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

- | |
|--|
| 15. East Cambs Street Scene Management Accounts for Quarter 4 to 31 March 2026 |
| 16. Exempt Minutes |
| To confirm as a correct record the exempt minutes for the meeting of the Operational Services Committee meeting held on 23 March 2026. |

Notes

- Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting. If you are visiting The Grange during normal working hours you should report to the main reception desk. If you come to an evening meeting please enter via the door in the glass atrium at the back of the building.

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@eastcamb.gov.uk or 01353 665555) of their intention to attend a meeting.

The livestream of this meeting will be available on [the committee meeting's webpage](http://www.eastcamb.gov.uk/node/3480) (www.eastcamb.gov.uk/node/3480). Please be aware that all attendees, including those in the public gallery, will be visible on the livestream.

2. Public Questions/Statements are welcomed on any topic related to the Committee's functions as long as there is no suspicion that it is improper (for example, 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](http://www.eastcamb.gov.uk/about-council/meetings-agendas-and-minutes/public-participation-meetings/public-question-time) (www.eastcamb.gov.uk/about-council/meetings-agendas-and-minutes/public-participation-meetings/public-question-time).

3. 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 in our building or at our meetings and would ask members of the public to bring their own drink to the meeting if required.
4. Fire instructions for meetings:
 - if the fire alarm sounds, please make your way out of the building by the nearest available exit, which is usually the back staircase or the fire escape in the Chamber and do not attempt to use the lifts
 - the fire assembly point is in the front staff car park by the exit barrier
 - the building has an auto-call system to the fire services so there is no need for anyone to call the fire services

The Committee Officer will sweep the area to ensure that everyone is out.

5. Reports are attached for each agenda item unless marked "oral".
6. If required, all items on the agenda can be provided in different formats (such as large type, Braille or audio tape, or translated into other languages), on request, by calling main reception on (01353) 665555 or e-mail: translate@eastcamb.gov.uk
7. 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(s). X 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 Category X of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."



Minutes of a Meeting of the Operational Services Committee

Held at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE at 4:30 pm on
Monday 23 March 2026

Present

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith
Cllr David Brown
Cllr Christine Colbert
Cllr Lorna Dupré (substitute)
Cllr Martin Goodearl
Cllr Kathrin Holtzmann
Cllr Julia Huffer (Chair)
Cllr Alan Sharp
Cllr John Trapp
Cllr Ross Trent
Cllr Lucius Vellacott (Vice Chair)
Cllr Christine Whelan

Officers

Patrick Adams – Senior Democratic Services Officer
Nigel Ankers – Senior Finance Manager
Lewis Bage – Communities and Partnerships Manager
Nick Baker – Waste and Environmental Services Manager
Emma Graves – Neighbourhood and Community Safety Officer
Martin Grey – Leisure and Active Lifestyles Manager
Emma Grima – Chief Executive and ECSS Managing Director
Philippa Nowikow – Project Coordinator (Health and Wellbeing)
Ashleigh O'Connor – Planning Service Development and Technical Support
Marisa Rogers-Jones – Crematorium and Bereavement Service Manager
Helen Sarkies – Customer Services Manager
Anne Wareham – Senior Accountant

58. Public Question Time

No public questions were submitted.

59. Apologies and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mark Inskip. Cllr Lorna Dupré attended as a substitute for Cllr Inskip.

60. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Alan Sharp declared a personal interest in agenda item 10, Service Delivery Plans and End of Year Reports, as the Chair of Board of Governors at Bottisham Village College.

61. Minutes

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 January 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

62. Chair's Announcements

The Chair reminded the Committee that questions directed to officers should be for clarification. Other points should be confined to the debate.

63. Community Safety Partnership 6 Monthly Report

This item was discussed after agenda item 15, Voluntary and Community Action East Cambridgeshire SLA Performance Monitoring Update.

Emma Graves, Neighbourhood and Community Safety Team Leader, introduced this report, AA155 previously circulated, which updated the Committee on the work of the East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership over the last six months. It was understood that as Lis Every, the Chair of the East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership, was not present, Committee members could expect answers to their questions in writing.

Cllr Martin Goodearl asked what was meant by "identifying vulnerabilities" and what the "improved access and positive outcomes" were in Littleport. It was understood that these questions would be forwarded to the Chair of the East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership and this report would be carried forward to the next meeting of the Committee.

It was resolved to:

Note the report from the Chair of the East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership.

64. Budget Monitoring Report

Anne Wareham, Senior Accountant, presented this report, AA156 previously circulated, which updated the Committee on the financial position for services under the Operational Services Committee.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, the Senior Accountant agreed to provide a written answer to explain why a large amount of the 2025/26 budget for Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants had not been spent.

It was resolved to:

- (i) Note that the Committee was currently projecting a year-end underspend of £229,000 on its revenue budget of £6,842,567.
- (ii) Note that the Committee has a projected capital programme outturn of £14,987,148. This was also in line with the revised budget.

65. ECSS Business Plan 2026/27

Emma Grima, ECSS Managing Director, presented this report, which invited the Committee to approve the annual ECSS Business Plan 2026/27.

The Senior Finance Manager explained that more money has been invested in new vehicles, which would reduce vehicle maintenance costs. The provision of wheeled bins meant less expenditure on black bin bags.

In reply to Cllr Martin Goodearl, the Senior Finance Manager stated that HVO fuel had increased by 20p per litre. This would be monitored as it would mean an extra cost for the Council.

In reply to Cllr Lorna Dupré, the ECSS Managing Director confirmed that ECSS was a Teckal company and she explained that the picture on page 28 was purely illustrative and was not meant to be a Venn diagram. Later in the meeting it was stated that increasing the number of staff from 65 to 80 members had increased costs by £616,841. It was understood that this meant less expenditure on temporary staff. It was expected that the budget would break even for 2025/26.

Cllr Julia Huffer proposed and Cllr Lucius Vellacott seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and it was unanimously

resolved to

Approve the ECSS Business Plan 2026/27 as set out in Appendix 1.

66. New Waste Collection Service – Project Update

Nick Baker, Waste and Environmental Services Manager, presented a report, AA158 previously circulated, which updated the Committee on progress towards implementing the necessary changes to the Council's waste and recycling collection service, as approved by Full Council. The delivery of the new food waste collection vehicles had been delayed and so loan vehicles would be provided by the manufacturer, at no extra cost, until the new vehicles arrived. In addition, the Council

was working with a number of hire companies and another authority to hire temporary vehicles as a contingency against any further delays. It was noted that the new collection service was still scheduled to commence on 1 June 2026.

In reply to Cllr Kathrin Holtzmann, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager explained that a carbon impact assessment for the possible late delivery of newer, more efficient vehicles was unnecessary, as this was only a contingency plan and even if it was enacted, it would only be over a short period of time.

In reply to Cllr Martin Goodearl's question about keeping residents updated, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager replied that the dates for delivering the bins to residents had not changed. An information pack would be taped to the top of every wheeled bin.

In reply to Cllr Lucius Vellacott, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager reported that a communications strategy was in place and contingency communications had already been considered, in the unlikely event that residents needed to be informed of a delay in the delivery of the new collection service.

In reply to Cllr Christine Whelan, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager explained that, during the initial weeks of the new service, a dedicated collection crew for each waste commodity would be available every day to carry out missed bin collections. These would be carried out a day after the bins should have been collected and so bins missed on Friday would be collected on Saturday.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager stated that community collections of waste in black bags would continue, and he asked Cllr Trapp to report any specific collection service that he was concerned about, outside the meeting, as these collections were being reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

It was resolved to:

Note the progress made on this project to date and that the project remains on budget and on track to deliver the required changes in the Council's waste collection and recycling service.

67. Service Delivery Plans and End of Year Reports

Emma Grima, Chief Executive, presented a report, AA159 previously circulated, which invited the Committee to consider the Service Delivery Plans for 2026/27 and end of year reports 2025/26 for services reporting to the Operational Services Committee.

New Bereavement Services

In reply to Cllr Martin Goodearl, the Crematorium and Bereavement Service Manager explained that staff at the Bereavement Centre will be able to multi-task and therefore cover staff leave or sickness. Most of the gardening work would be carried out by the Council's Open Spaces team.

Community and Partnerships

In reply to Cllr Alan Sharp, the Communities and Partnerships Manager reported that detached youth engagement was being carried out throughout the district and any feedback received was passed on to the relevant organisation for them to consider. The Council had developed and shared a Youth Event Toolkit with local groups and the authority can help organisations use the Toolkit to deliver their own youth events.

Customer Services

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, the Customer Services Manager explained that customer satisfaction rates were improving.

Environmental Health Service

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager explained that Sanctuary had agreed to fund 40% of the cost of disabled adaptations in their homes but there had been a delay in the receipt of purchase orders. These had now been received for most of the current financial year, and the Council was working with Sanctuary regarding payments for the remainder of that year.

Strategic Planning and Development Management Service

In reply to Cllr Kathrin Holtzmann, the Planning Service Development and Technical Support explained that following the withdrawal of the tree strategy, the policy team were considering the next steps, which would be shared with the Committee.

In reply to Cllr Christine Colbert, the Planning Service Development and Technical Support explained that the target for determining major applications had not been met due to delays in the drafting of the Section 106 agreements, the Committee requesting more information and a delay in receiving information from a consultee. The target of ensuring that all applications were determined within 26 weeks, unless an extension had been agreed, would not be met. In most cases, this was due to applications going back to the Planning Committee after permission had been granted, in order to satisfy planning conditions imposed by the Council; in other cases, it was due to appeals for non-determination. The Planning Service Development and Technical Support was prepared to give more details on any specific case.

In reply to Cllr Christine Whelan, the Planning Service Development and Technical Support explained that the temporary staff were currently employed in the planning team. However, eight interviews would be held in April for permanent planning positions. During staff turnover, every effort was made to ensure the transition was as smooth as possible. Customer Services were able to view the internal planning system to ensure that queries were addressed to the correct case officer.

Cllr Julia Huffer proposed and Cllr Lucius Vellacott seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and the Committee unanimously

resolved to:

Approve the Service Delivery Plans (SDP) and note end of year (EOY) reports in Appendix 1, for the following services:

- a) New Bereavement Services (SPD only)
- b) Building Control
- c) Communities & Partnerships
- d) Communications
- e) Customer Services
- f) New – Digital & Information Service
- g) New – Environmental Health Services (SDP only)
- h) Housing and Community Advice
- i) Leisure and Active Lifestyles
- j) Licensing
- k) Strategic Planning and Development Management
- l) Waste and Environmental Services (EOY only)
- m) New – Waste Management SDP

68. Housing Enforcement and Financial Civil Penalties Policies 2026

Nick Baker, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager, presented a report, AA160 previously circulated, which updated the Committee on the Housing Enforcement and Civil Penalties policy in light of the introduction of the Renters' Right Act 2025.

In reply to Cllr David Brown, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager stated that he would update the Committee on whether and how registered social landlords would be affected by the Act.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager stated that he would update the Committee on two points; firstly, the issues of penalties where joint landlords had committed the same offence at the same property and secondly on why the Council might commence formal enforcement, without first taking informal action.

Cllr Alan Sharp proposed and Cllr Martin Goodearl seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and the Committee unanimously

resolved to:

- (i) Approve the Housing Enforcement and Financial Civil Penalty Policies 2026 (Appendix 1 and 2) in preparation for implementation on 1 May 2026.
- (ii) Provide delegated authority for the Director Operations to make operational changes in this fast-changing area of regulation.

69. Community Sports Facilities Grant

Martin Grey, Leisure and Active Lifestyles Manager, presented a report, AA161 previously circulated, which considered a grant recommendation under the Community Sports Facilities Grants programme.

Cllr David Brown proposed and Cllr Lucius Vellacott seconded the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and it was unanimously

resolved to:

Approve a grant of £48,000 to Burwell Community Sports Centre as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

70. Lake View Bereavement Centre – Rules and Regulations Policy 2026

Marisa Rogers-Jones, Crematorium and Bereavement Service Manager, presented a report, AA162 previously circulated, to consider and approve the Lake View Bereavement Centre, Crematorium and Natural Burials Rules and Regulations, including the Framework for Enforcement, to provide clear standards for the operation, use and management of the site.

In reply to Cllr Ross Trent, the Crematorium and Bereavement Service Manager agreed to provide the Committee with the dimensions of meadow natural burial graves.

In reply to Cllr David Brown, the Crematorium and Bereavement Service Manager reported that she would respond to the Committee regarding the following suggested minor amendments:

- Define the time period for which vehicles could be left unattended at the Centre.
- Include reference to the Council's successor, as the Council will be abolished in just over two years.
- Include reference to visiting hours and public holidays under the heading Opening Hours.
- Define Easter in the list of days that the office will be closed.

In reply to Cllr Christine Colbert, it was noted that "bears" should be amended to "bearers" on page 289 of the agenda.

In reply to Cllr Martin Goodearl, it was agreed that a book of remembrance should be provided.

In reply to Cllr Lucius Vellacott, the Crematorium and Bereavement Service Manager explained that the character of the meadow needed to be maintained and therefore permanent memorial plaques would be installed in a separate designated area. Flowers, without plastic, could be left and would be removed and recycled after 14 days. The location of the planned pet cemetery had not yet been confirmed.

Cllr Julia Huffer proposed and Cllr Lucius Vellacott seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and with 6 votes in favour, no votes against and 6 abstentions

it was resolved to:

- (i) Approve the Lake View Bereavement Centre, Crematorium and Natural Burial Rules and Regulations (Appendix 1).
- (ii) Delegate authority to the Crematorium and Bereavement Service Manager to implement non-material changes and manage the Rules and Regulations as the operational standard for the site, including day-to-day decision-making and enforcement in line with the approval framework.

71. Public Spaces Protection Order – Vehicle Related Anti-Social Behaviour

Emma Graves, Neighbourhood and Community Safety Officer, presented a report, AA163 previously circulated, which invited the Committee to consider the Vehicle Related Anti-Social Behaviour Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) consultation findings and approve the implementation of the PSPO.

In reply to Cllr David Brown, the Communities and Partnerships Manager explained that, if implemented, the PSPO would be carefully monitored and after three years a decision would have to be taken on whether to renew it. It was noted that by then the Council will have been replaced by a unitary authority.

In reply to Cllr Martin Goodearl, the Communities and Partnerships Manager stated that the Police would be responsible for gathering evidence of any PSPO breach and if the evidence was sufficient, they would ask the Council to issue a fixed penalty notice. Cllr Lorna Dupré asked if the Police would use CCTV when gathering evidence. After a brief discussion it was agreed that the Committee should receive an update on this matter, hopefully at September's meeting. It was noted that the Council's Legal team would be consulted with regard to Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) policy compliance, in the event of CCTV being used by the Council.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott proposed and Cllr Martin Goodearl seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and it was unanimously

resolved to:

- (i) Note the PSPO consultation findings at Appendix 1.
- (ii) Approve the implementation of the draft Vehicle Related Anti-Social Behaviour Public Spaces Protection Order at Appendix 2 for a period of three years.

72. Voluntary and Community Action East Cambridgeshire SLA Performance Monitoring Update

Philippa Nowikow, Project Coordinator (Health and Wellbeing), presented a report, AA163 previously circulated, which invited the Committee to consider the outcome of a review of the grant awarded to Voluntary and Community Action East Cambridgeshire (VCAEC) for 2024 to 2026 and determine whether to award a new grant for 2026 to 2028.

Cllr Julia Huffer proposed and Cllr Lucius Vellacott seconded the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and the Committee unanimously

resolved to:

- (i) Note the review findings.
- (ii) Award a grant to VCAEC to support the delivery of services via a Service Level Agreement from 1 April 2026 until 31 March 2028.

73. Draft Minutes of Anglia Revenues Partnership for 9th December 2025

The Committee received the minutes from the Anglia Revenues Benefit Joint Committee meeting on 9 December 2025.

It was resolved:

To note the Minutes of the Anglia Revenues & Benefits Joint Committee meeting on 9 December 2025.

74. Forward Agenda Plan

The Committee considered its Forward Agenda Plan. It was understood that it had been agreed earlier in the meeting to receive an update on the Community Safety Partnership at its next meeting and an update on the PSPO at its meeting in September.

It was resolved to:

Note the Forward Agenda Plan, amended to include an update from the Community Safety Partnership on 22 June 2026 and a report on the Public Spaces Protection Order to be scheduled for 14 September 2026.

75. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Cllr Martin Goodearl proposed and Cllr David Brown seconded that the meeting should go into private session. A vote was taken and with 11 votes in favour, 0 against and 1 abstention it was resolved:

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 Category 3 of Part 1 Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

76. East Cambs Street Scene Management Accounts for the 9 months to December 2025 - EXEMPT

The Committee considered a report, AA165 previously circulated, which considered the ECSS Management Accounts for the 9 months to December 2025.

It was resolved that:

The ECSS Management Accounts for the 9 months to December 2025 be noted.

The meeting concluded at 5.51 pm

Chair

Date.....

Title: Community Safety Partnership 6 monthly report

Committee: Operational Services

Date: 22 June 2026

Author: Neighbourhood and Community Safety Team Leader

Report number: AB17

Contact officer:

Emma Graves, Neighbourhood and Community Safety Team Leader

Emma.graves@eastcambs.gov.uk , 01353 616326, room number 21, The Grange, Ely

Issue

1. To note the report at Appendix 1 from the Chair of the East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership (ECCSP).

Recommendations

2. To note the report at Appendix 1 from the Chair of the ECCSP.

Background/Options

3. Community safety partnerships (CSPs) are made up of representatives from the 'responsible authorities' which are the police, fire and rescue authorities, probation service, local authorities, and health. The responsible authorities work together to protect their local communities from crime and to help people feel safer. They work out how to deal with local issues like antisocial behaviour, drug or alcohol misuse and reoffending.
4. CSPs are scrutinised by crime and disorder overview and scrutiny committees. Under the 2006 Police and Justice Act, councils are under an obligation to allocate this function to one of their committees.
5. ECDC's Operational Services Committee is the scrutiny committee for the ECCSP.
6. The ECCSP Terms of Reference requires that either the Chair or Vice Chair of the ECCSP provides an update to Operational Services Committee twice a year, for scrutiny purposes.
7. The ECCSP last provided an update to Operational Services Committee in September 2025.

Arguments/Conclusions

8. The Chair of the ECCSP has prepared the report at Appendix 1.

Additional Implications Assessment

9.

Financial Implications N/A	Legal Implications N/A	Human Resources (HR) Implications N/A
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) N/A	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) N/A	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) N/A

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Chair/Vice Chair’s update report.

Background documents

None

EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (ECCSP)

Update Report to ECDC Operational Committee Meeting on Monday 23 March 2026

Rationale

CSPs are scrutinised by Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committees and under the 2006 Police and Justice Act, Councils are under an obligation to allocate this function to one of their committees. The ECDC's Operational Services Committee is the scrutiny committee for the ECCSP.

Author

Lis Every, Chair of the ECCSP

Report

This report updates the Operational Committee on its recent Partnership Board meetings held since December 2025, monitoring of the third quarter of the Action Plan (available on the ECDC Website), based on evidence from the Strategic Assessment, and provides examples of current activities taking place.

Strategic Assessment and Action Plan

CSP priorities:

- 1) Understanding risk and susceptibility of individuals (people) and locations (places) and helping communities respond to this,
- 2) Work to tackle violence in East Cambridgeshire, with a particular focus on serious violence.

The strategic role of the CSP

The CSP influences and supports local, regional and national strategy on community safety matters. The Chair and Officers attend regional and area Committees and Boards providing intelligence and feedback on the initiatives that have been planned and implemented locally. The Chair sits on the High Harms Board and the CSP Area Chairs' Group. Emma Graves, our Neighbourhood & Community Safety Team Leader sits on other relevant Boards

The 2025/2026 Action Plan

Most areas of the previous action plan update have been completed. The final monitoring process is being undertaken and preparation is in hand for the 2026/2027 Action Plan are in hand.

Update on the delivery, performance and emerging issues since our last report to the Operational Services Committee based on the Partnership meetings and operational activities.

Prevent Delivery and Support: In line with national requirements, this continues to be an important item on our agendas and a briefing document was circulated. We will receive a further update at the next meeting..

Overview of the City of Ely CCTV Scheme: The CCTV scheme has undergone significant restructuring and is now operated from Sessions House rather than the police station with a full time staff manager.

- The scheme relies heavily on volunteers, covering 8 four-hour shifts per week aligned to police-prioritised times and special events.
- Phase 1 (upgrade of existing cameras) has been completed.
- Phase 2 will extend coverage to perimeter areas of the city.
- Additional coverage is in place during peak times when volunteers are unavailable.

Impact and Partnership Working

- CCTV supports the Stopwatch initiative, contributing to more positive enforcement outcomes.
- Funding has been secured from East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) for coverage of:
 - The Ely side of the underpass
 - Hive Leisure Centre

The CSP Shopwatch scheme: This is currently coordinated via a WhatsApp group and administered by the Chair of the Ely Traders Association

- Most local businesses are now signed up.
- There is a plan to promote Shopwatch district-wide and share success stories.

Emerging Picture for local Serious Organised Crime (SOC): We have been advised that SOC activity is expanding beyond traditional drugs and firearms to include:

- Fraud and cybercrime
- Organised shoplifting
- Exploitation and corruption
- Online grooming networks
- Child sexual exploitation
- Human trafficking and modern slavery

Technology, particularly social media, is a significant driver of criminal activity. There is increasing evidence of:

- Grooming of young males to recruit and groom others

- Coercion involving self-harm imagery
- Exploitation within care settings

Our Local Vulnerabilities include:

- Rural immigration “drops”
- Youth violence hotspots in Ely
- Identified vulnerabilities in Littleport, Soham and North Ely
- East Cambridgeshire increasingly used for movement of arms and stolen goods
- Two identified SOC groups operating locally (drugs, exploitation, immigration crime)

Across Cambridgeshire, over 30 SOC groups are estimated to be active. Regional hotspots include Peterborough and Cambridge City, with increasing concerns in Fenland and Huntingdon.

Enforcement Activity and Successes

Recent activity in Ely by the Police resulted in the closures of premises including vape shops, cannabis factories and a local brothel.

Neighbourhood policing teams are conducting joint operations with Immigration Officers, retail visits and youth engagement programmes.

Recommendations for the CSP priorities are to

- Increase public awareness of rural and acquisitive crime
- Strengthen cross-border liaison with Norfolk and Suffolk.
- Build community resilience working with Councillors and Parish Councils.
- Establish a cross-CSP SOC Working Group.
- Add SOC as a standing agenda item at CSP Leads meetings

Considerations for success and sustainability:

- Adequacy of resources to address technology-enabled crime.
- Data-sharing and cross-border coordination.
- Early intervention and youth prevention capacity.

CSP Action Plan 2025–26 is in the final stage of monitoring

PSG/ASB Update

Youth Projects

1. Littleport – improved access and positive outcomes.
2. Soham – Connections Youth Project launching January at the Recreation Ground.
3. Ely – Fitness Rush Bus achieving increased engagement with identified young people.

Ely remains the principal ASB focus area. The CSP is reporting to the City of Ely Full Council on the 23rd March. Targeted Police patrols and outreach work are improving reporting levels.

Retail Crime and Enforcement

- Retail Crime Week saw strong police engagement in Ely.
- Additional foot patrol funding was secured.
- Emphasis on accurate reporting to be able to access additional funding streams.

The forthcoming Crime and Policing Bill is expected to strengthen housing enforcement powers, including closure orders and Respect Orders.

ASB Case Reviews: Councillors may be aware of the above which are triggered when a complainant feels that their complaint has not been fully investigated or reached a satisfactory conclusion from their perspective. They are very often neighbourhood disputes which are on the increase in East Cambridgeshire. A review of ASB Case Review processes has identified opportunities for streamlining and improved efficiency to deal with the increased number of these.

CSP Showcase Event: We are currently planning the best way for this which may include a closed CSP meeting followed by a public-facing event with presentations, stalls and themed break-out sessions (e.g., cybercrime). This approach is being piloted in South Cambridgeshire and we will liaise with them regarding success or otherwise and lessons to be learnt.

Anti-social Vehicle-Related Issues: The District-wide Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) consultation commenced 12 January (5–6 weeks). If implemented:

- It puts Police enforcement powers in place.
- ECDC will be responsible for Fixed Penalty Notices (£100) and prosecutions.
- There will be a requirement to ensure public awareness of PSPO areas.

Summary

The Partnership continues to demonstrate strong operational activity across CCTV provision, youth engagement, SOC disruption and retail crime. However, key themes emerging include:

- Sustainability of volunteer-dependent services (CCTV).
- Rising complexity of technology-enabled and organised crime.
- Need for stronger cross-border and multi-agency intelligence sharing.
- Ensuring analytical information directly informs operational activity.
- Performance monitoring and consistent partner engagement.

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

Conclusion

Appendix 1

The above report was prepared on 27th February 2026 just prior to the next CSP meeting on 2 March 2026. If more relevant updated information is available we can provide this to the meeting. We continue to welcome observers to our meetings and are also looking to record meetings. We recently had observers from our MP's office, and Anglia Ruskin University Criminology graduate students with mutual benefit activities planned regarding research. Support from our local Councillors is very much part of the multi agency approach and Councillors are also welcome to attend the CSP Partnership Board meetings as observers. Please request the forthcoming dates and an invitation from Emma Graves, emma.graves@eastcambs.gov.uk.

Title: Budget Outturn Report

Committee: Operational Services Committee

Date: 22nd June 2026

Author: Director, Finance

Report No: AB18

Contact Officer: Jude Antony

Director, Finance

Tel: (01353) 616470

E-mail: jude.antony@eastcambs.gov.uk

Room 127, The Grange, Ely

Issue

1. This report provides Members with details of the financial position for services under the Operational Services Committee.

Recommendation(s)

2. Members are requested to note that the Committee had a revenue underspend of £ 476,084 when compared to its approved budget of £6,842,567.
3. Members are further requested to note that the Committee had capital programme spend of £9,514,373. This is an underspend of £5,572,775 when compared to its revised budget.

Background / Options

4. Under Financial Regulations each policy committee is required to consider projections of financial performance against both its revenue and capital budget on a quarterly basis.
5. This is the final report for the 2025/26 financial year, and details actual expenditure incurred and income received as of 31st March 2026.

Revenue

6. The revenue budget for each service that falls under the stewardship of this Committee has been reviewed with appendix 1 detailing the variance on each service line.

7. The net revenue expenditure for this Committee at yearend is £6,366,483. This is an underspend of £476,084 when compared to the approved budget. This is the combination of the forecast variations on service lines, as detailed in the table below.

Service	Variance £	Explanation
Building Control	£71,175	The overspend within Building Control reflects ongoing uncertainty within the construction sector. Although application volumes and market share increased during the year, there was a shift towards smaller extensions and alterations rather than higher-value new build applications, resulting in lower fee income than originally forecast. Income levels are expected to improve in future years as planning applications progress and following the review of Building Control fees and charges.
Community Projects & Grants	(£30,304)	Only two Facilities Improvement Grants were awarded during the year despite ongoing promotion of the scheme through parish and community meetings, presentations, direct communications and enquiries. As a result, grant expenditure was lower than originally budgeted.
Dog Warden Scheme	(£12,242)	The underspend within the service was primarily due to a temporary vacancy following the departure of the previous Dog Warden to another department.
Care & Repair	£158,261	The variance relates to invoices being raised in a previous financial year, resulting in the associated expenditure and income being recognised in different financial years.
Environmental Health	(£18,841)	Additional fine income relating to new housing legislation (Renters Rights Act) was invoiced during the financial year, increasing income levels, although the invoices remained outstanding at year-end.
Homelessness	£47,808	Expenditure within the service increased due to the continued use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for high-risk clients, including prison releases, whilst longer-term plans are being developed to reduce reliance on this provision. In addition, a moving-on fund was introduced to support clients being housed for the first time with essential items such as white goods and furniture, following the withdrawal of external funding and charitable support.

Leisure Centre	(£132,677)	Income within the service increased during 2025/26 as the Hive management fee reverted back to the agreed level under the original open book agreement, following the temporary arrangements put in place to support the centre during the Covid recovery period.
Licensing	(£393,020)	The licensing service continues to see increased levels of work entering the department both from the new restricted private hire type of licence and other areas of licensing, which has increased the costs and corporate oncosts. The underspend shown goes towards associated oncosts and expenditure carried forward. Overall fees will continue to be monitored, in order for discretionary fees remain at cost recovery levels.
Planning	(£217,820)	The Planning service generated additional income during the year through a number of large Planning Performance Agreements, together with strong planning application and pre-application activity. The additional income supported the use of contractors and temporary resources to meet the demands of these agreements, with further expenditure expected over the life of the projects and provision included within future budgets. Overall, this resulted in an underspend of £217,820 for the year.
Refuse Recycling	£18,373	This overspend relates to additional costs relating to the introduction of the new black bins.
Travellers Sites	£21,103	Expenditure on repairs and maintenance at the Traveller sites was higher than originally budgeted during the financial year due to increased site maintenance requirements.

Capital

- The revised capital budget for Operational Services stands at £15,087,148 including net slippage of £1,172,973 brought forward from 2024/25 including mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) of £520,505 and additions of £2,197,397.

9. The outturn position for the Committee is £9,514,373 against a revised capital budget of £15,087,148, resulting in a net underspend of £5,572,775.
10. The underspend primarily reflects the reprofiling of expenditure into future years on a number of major schemes. The most significant variance relates to the Bereavement Centre project, which underspent by £3,529,235 against the revised budget. Whilst substantial progress has been made during the year, expenditure was lower than anticipated due to the timing of construction works and project delivery milestones, with the remaining budget being carried forward to support completion of the scheme.
11. Further underspends arose on the Refuse and Cleansing Vehicles programme (£1,032,993) and the Waste Wheeled Bins project (£786,909). These variances reflect delays in procurement and delivery timelines, resulting in expenditure being reprofiled into next financial year. Additional underspends were reported on Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (£188,116) and Food Waste Caddies (£168,147), where demand and delivery profiles differed from those assumed when the budget was set.

Arguments / Conclusions

12. The Committee's net revenue position at the end of the financial year resulted in an underspent of £ 476,084.

Additional Implications Assessment

13. In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

Financial Implications Yes	Legal Implications No	Human Resources (HR) Implications No
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) No	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) No	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) No

(a) Financial Implications

The Committee's underspend has been incorporated into the overall 2025/26 Council Finance Report, which will be presented to Finance and Assets Committee on the 25th June 2026. This underspend will be transferred to the Surplus Savings Reserve to assist in balancing the budget in future years.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Revenue budget outturn report – 31st March 2026.
- Appendix 2 – Capital budget outturn report – 31st March 2026.

Background Documents

Council Budget as approved by Full Council on the 25th February 2025.

Appendix 1

Revenue	Total Budget 2025-26	Actual to 31 March 2025	Variance
	£	£	£
Building Regulations	36,436	107,611	71,175
Community Projects & Grants	206,095	175,791	(30,304)
Community Safety	64,358	65,483	1,125
Cons. Area & Listed Buildings	74,808	81,520	6,712
Customer Services	665,279	672,696	7,417
Dog Warden Scheme	50,553	38,311	(12,242)
Emergency Planning	32,148	38,961	6,813
Environmental	52,087	55,659	3,572
Environmental Health	620,980	602,139	(18,841)
Care & Repair	(98,842)	59,419	158,261
Homelessness	326,611	374,419	47,808
Leisure Centre	(502,043)	(634,720)	(132,677)
Licensing	26,040	(366,980)	(393,020)
Marketing & Grants	34,266	31,126	(3,140)
Parish Forums	1,561	979	(582)
Nuisances	115,533	119,797	4,264
Planning	395,659	177,839	(217,820)
Public Relations	124,682	125,083	401
Recycling	1,649,812	1,668,185	18,373
Refuse Collection	1,850,473	1,844,146	(6,327)
Street Cleansing	1,082,792	1,082,888	96
Street Naming & Numbering	33,279	25,028	(8,251)
Travellers Sites	0	21,103	21,103
Revenue Total	6,842,567	6,366,483	(476,084)

Capital Outturn 2025/26

Capital	Published Budget 2025-26	Slippage from 2024-25	Additions	Revised Budget 2025-26	Outturn	Variance between Revised Budget & Outturn
	£	£	£	£	£	£
OPERATIONAL SERVICES						
Conservation Area Schemes - 2nd round		27,506		27,506	0	(27,506)
Refuse & Cleansing Vehicles	1,964,000	623,620		2,587,620	1,554,627	(1,032,993)
Waste - Wheelied Bins	1,040,000			1,040,000	253,091	(786,909)
Food Waste Caddies	280,256			280,256	112,109	(168,147)
Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants	697,299	520,505		1,217,804	1,029,688	(188,116)
Empty Properties, Discretionary DFGs, Minor Works, Home Repair Asst.	75,000			75,000	35,843	(39,157)
Vehicle Etc. Replacements	100,000			100,000	299,288	199,288
Bereavement Centre	7,560,223	1,342	2,197,397	9,758,962	6,229,727	(3,529,235)
Leisure Centre				0	0	0
Operational Services Total	11,716,778	1,172,973	2,197,397	15,087,148	9,514,373	(5,572,775)

SOURCES OF FINANCING	Published Budget 2025-26	Slippage from 2024-25	Additions	Revised Budget 2025-26	Outturn	Variances
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Operational Services						
Government Grants (DFG)	602,678	520,505		1,123,183	1,029,688	(93,495)
Government Grants (Food Waste)	894,056	0		894,056	365,200	(528,856)
Capital Receipts	209,621	27,506		237,127	35,843	(201,284)
Borrowing	1,850,200	623,620		2,473,820	1,054,627	(1,419,193)
Section 106 / CIL	8,160,223	1,342	2,197,397	10,358,962	7,029,015	(3,329,947)
Operational Services Total	11,716,778	1,172,973	2,197,397	15,087,148	9,514,373	(5,572,775)

TITLE: Register of Buildings of Local Interest

Committee: Operational Services Committee

Date: 22 June 2026

Author: Conservation Officer

Report number: AB19

Contact officer:

Christopher Partrick, Conservation Officer

christopher.partick@eastcambs.gov.uk, 01353 616309, 011, The Grange, Ely

Issue

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update about the expanded Register of Buildings of Local Interest.

Recommendations

2. Members are requested to note the contents of the report.

Background/Options

3. Policy ENV13 of the 2015 East Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan states that the Council will prepare a local register of buildings that make a valuable contribution to the local scene, local distinctiveness and/or local history, but which do not merit inclusion on the national list. These will be given additional protection and their status will be a material consideration, but they will not have the full protection of statutory listing.
4. The Council adopted a Register of Buildings of Local Interest (a 'local list') covering 89 sites in February 2017 but it soon became evident that this had significant shortcomings in terms of coverage and consistency. Fortunately its three year review in 2020 coincided with a central government initiative to fund a number of pilot projects to trial approaches to local listing, and a joint county-wide bid was successful in establishing the Cambridgeshire Local Heritage List Project.
5. The Cambridgeshire Local Heritage List Project has funded a web-based portal for public contributions which has made the local list far more accessible and user-friendly, and has also employed a Project Officer (hosted by Cambridgeshire County Council, initially for 12 months and revived since 2025) to promote the project and lead on community engagement across the county.
6. The 35 parishes in East Cambridgeshire were surveyed systematically for the first time between 2022-24 and after vetting, the adoption of eligible sites under delegated powers began on a parish-by-parish basis in July 2024. Consultations have now been completed in all 35 parishes, and the results are as follows:

Total adopted local list entries = 678

Total rejected candidates = 39

Total removed entries = 6

7. The public response to the expansion of the local list has been mixed. Inevitably some property owners objected to the principle of designation but equally, others welcomed it as a recognition of their property's special interest. A particular problem was the lack of public awareness of the Cambridgeshire Local Heritage List Project. It was difficult to sustain publicity around the project after its initial launch in 2021, and the part-time Project Officer had to divide her time between five districts, so the only direct contact with most owners came at the point of adoption.
8. In practice however, most objections did not stand up to scrutiny or could be allayed by officers engaging individually, and the sole complaint which was referred to the Local Government Ombudsman was held to be unfounded, as the Council's adoption procedures accord with national guidance.
9. Although local listing is a valuable designation in its own right, it is particularly gratifying to record that 14 sites identified by the project so far have been accepted by Historic England for inclusion in the National Heritage List. That alone is a testament both to the quality of East Cambridgeshire's built heritage, and to the rigour and thoroughness of the local listing process.

Arguments/Conclusions

10. The completion of the local list in East Cambridgeshire will help ensure that a much wider and more representative selection of the district's built heritage will be recognised and protected for the future. It is the first participating district in the Cambridgeshire Local Heritage List Project to reach this stage, and will stand the Council in good stead when the forthcoming National Planning Policy Framework makes the provision of local lists a mandatory requirement.

Additional Implications Assessment

11. In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

Financial Implications No	Legal Implications No	Human Resources (HR) Implications No
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) No	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) Yes	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) No

(a) Carbon Impact Assessment

12. The Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) completed: In summary, the CIA concluded as follows:

There will be no direct carbon or other environmental impacts arising, positive or negative, from the implementation of the recommendation

Appendices

Cambridgeshire Local Heritage List Project website:

<https://local-heritage-list.org.uk/cambridgeshire/list?pagesize=25&displayMineOnly=False&sort=datelisteddesc&pageNumber=2&SubareaSelections=14&command=filter>

Background documents

Cambridgeshire Local Heritage List Campaign: Project Closure Report 30/9/22

Historic England Advice Note 7 Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage

Register of Buildings of Local Interest, Operational Services Committee Report, 14 November 2022

TITLE: Quarter 4 2025/26 performance report for the waste and street cleansing services

Committee: Operational Services Committee

Date: 22 June 2026

Author: Senior Waste Management Officer

Report number: AB20

Contact officer:

Contact officer: Catherine Sutherland - Senior Waste Management Officer

Catherine.sutherland@eastcambs.gov.uk 01353 616262. Room 208, The Grange, Ely

Issue

1. To provide the Committee with the Quarter 4 performance report on the delivery of the waste and street cleansing services by East Cambs Street Scene Ltd (ECSS).

Recommendations

2. Members are requested to note the performance of service delivery for Quarter 4 (January - March) 2025/26.

Background

3. Waste collection, recycling, and street cleansing are all services delivered by East Cambs Street Scene Ltd (ECSS), a trading company established on April 1st, 2018.
4. The Council continues to operate these services through ECSS and remains committed to maintaining high performance standards and service quality, ensuring best value for money in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) and the Service Delivery Plan.
5. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are used to effectively manage and monitor the service performance provided by ECSS.

Conclusions

6. The tables below summarise Quarter 4 performance against the KPIs outlined in the MoA:

Health and safety – staff welfare

Description of Key Performance Indicator	KPI	Tolerance	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
ECSS Accident Incident (AIR) score	4%	No data	3.59%	2.56%	5.13%	2.05%

Description of Key Performance Indicator	KPI	Tolerance	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
No. reported monthly near misses	10 or more	No data	3	4	3	3
Percentage of productive days	94% (sickness absence 6%)	90%	95.3%	94.9%	95.4%	96.6%

Waste Collection

Description of Key Performance Indicator	KPI	Tolerance	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Refuse – Average no. of missed bins per 100,000 bins collected	15	45	40	30	24	34
Recycling – Average no. of missed bins per 100,000 bins collected	30	90	51	37	35	42
Green – Average no. of missed bins per 100,000 bins collected	30	90	61	48	31	29
No. of service complaints	3	3	6	4	4	2
No. of service compliments	No target	No tolerance	0	1	0	2

Street Cleansing

Description of Key Performance Indicator	KPI	Tolerance	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Average monthly clean streets graded A on random inspection	95%	85%	100%	100%	100%	100%
No. streets graded C or below for litter on random inspection	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%

No. reported fly tips	No target	No tolerance	150	164	140	217
No. reported incidents of graffiti	No target	No tolerance	8	2	4	0
Removal of offensive graffiti within 1 working day	98%	98%	0%	0%	0%	N/A
Removal of fly tipped waste within 2 working days	98%	98%	86%	76%	90%	77%
No. overflowing litter bins reported per 100 bins emptied	3	3	1.04	0.98	0.31	0.31
No. overflowing dog bins reported per 100 bins emptied	1	No tolerance	1.4	1.73	0.76	1.51
No. of service complaints	3	3	3	0	0	2
No. of service compliments	No target	No tolerance	0	10	1	0

Communication, Education and Promotion

Description of Key Performance Indicator	KPI	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
School or Community groups engaged with	10 PA	0	1	18	8
Number of local events attended	10 PA	0	6	1	8
Recycling rate	60% (annual)	56.3%	52.7%	48.7%	
Overall waste tonnage reduction	1% (annual)	-8%	-5%	-4%	

Appendix 1 provides a visual summary of service performance, with slide numbers referenced in the following section.

7. Health and safety – staff welfare

Slide 1: This month saw a small decrease in accidents compared to the previous quarter.

8. Waste and recycling collections

Slide 3: There was a slight increase in missed recycling and rubbish collections during this quarter. These incidents continue to be closely monitored, with any recurring missed

collections identified, highlighted to collection crews, and managed accordingly to help improve service performance.

9. Street Cleansing

Slide 4: Cleansing performance has remained largely consistent with previous quarters. However, the average time taken to remove fly-tips increased slightly during the reporting period.

10. Recycling rate and waste tonnage reduction

Slide 8: Between October and December, the Council recycled 48.7% of collected waste, which was lower than during the same period last year. Recycling rates typically decline over the winter months due to the reduced volume of garden waste collected.

Disappointingly, the Council's contamination rate (the proportion of material placed in recycling bins that cannot be recycled) remained unchanged despite the launch of a contamination reduction campaign, including bin tags and lorry livery. Once the new waste service has become fully established, the team will review the campaign's effectiveness and consider additional measures to help reduce contamination.

11. Communications, Education and Promotion

The team continued to focus its efforts on promoting the new waste service. During this quarter, the deadline passed for residents to contact the Council to apply for larger bins or to advise that they did not have sufficient space to accommodate them. As a result, the team began processing the increased volume of enquiries and carrying out visits where required to assess applications and update records accordingly.

This quarter also saw the introduction of temporary officers within Customer Services to help manage the higher-than-expected volume of calls generated by the commencement of the bin rollout.

Additional Implications Assessment

12. In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

Financial Implications No	Legal Implications No	Human Resources (HR) Implications No
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) No	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) No	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) No

Appendices

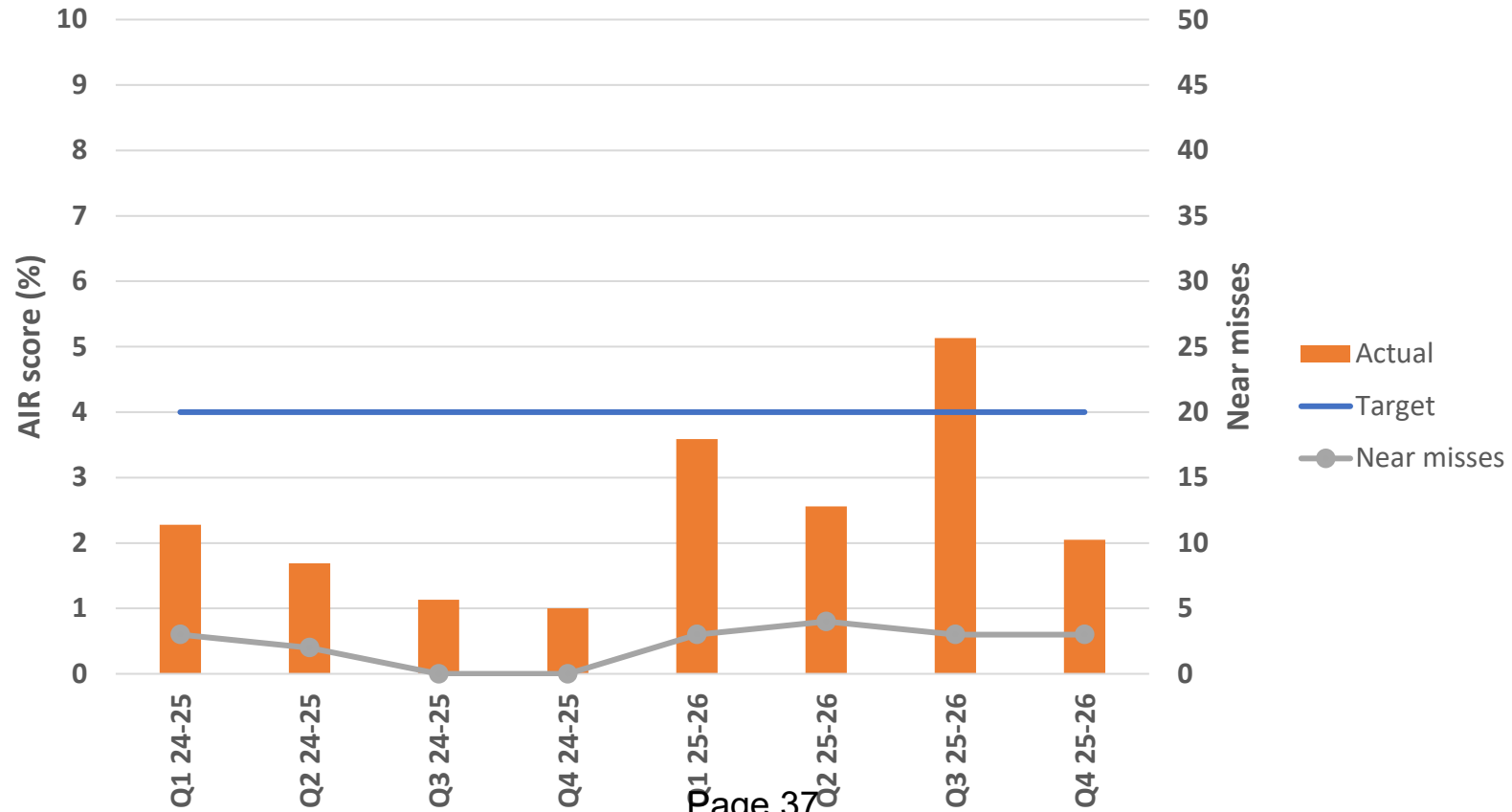
Appendix 1 - Slide deck - Performance Dashboard.

Background documents

None

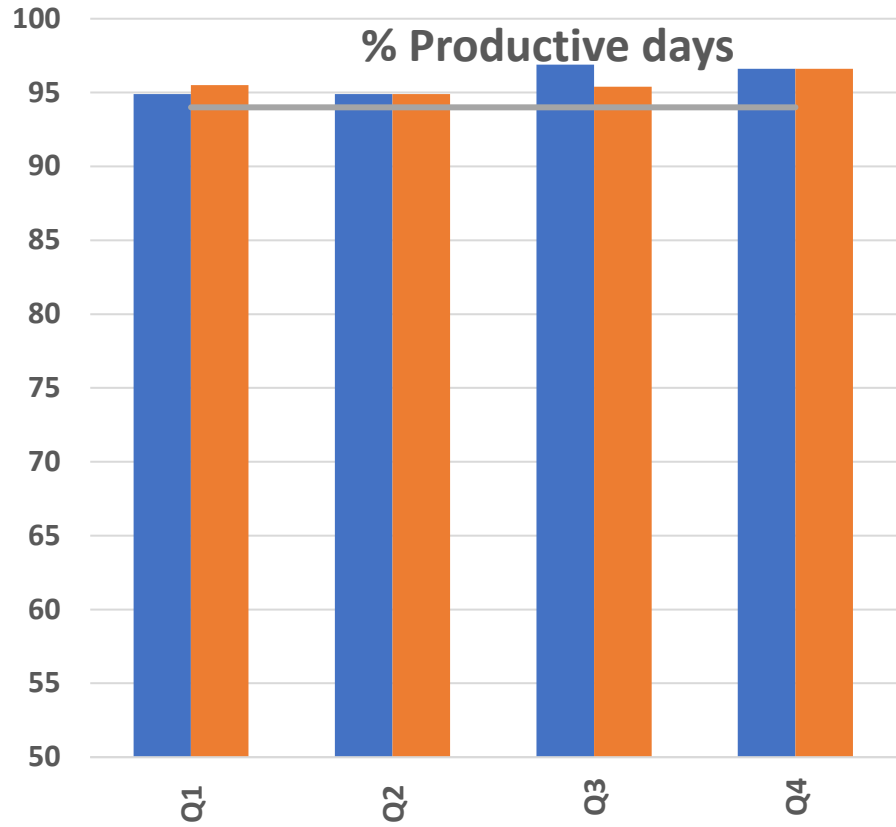
Health and Safety – staff welfare

Accident Incident Score, near misses

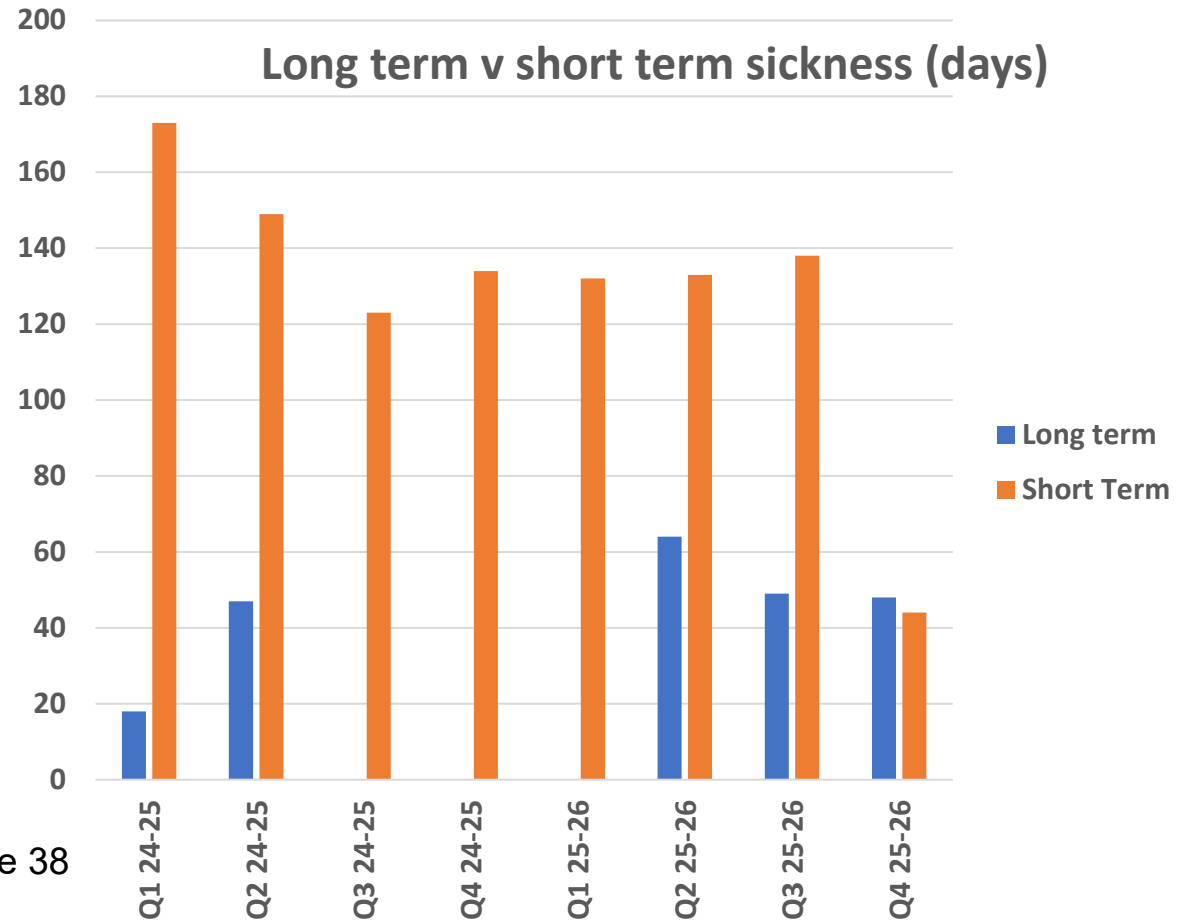


Health and safety – staff welfare

Staff sickness

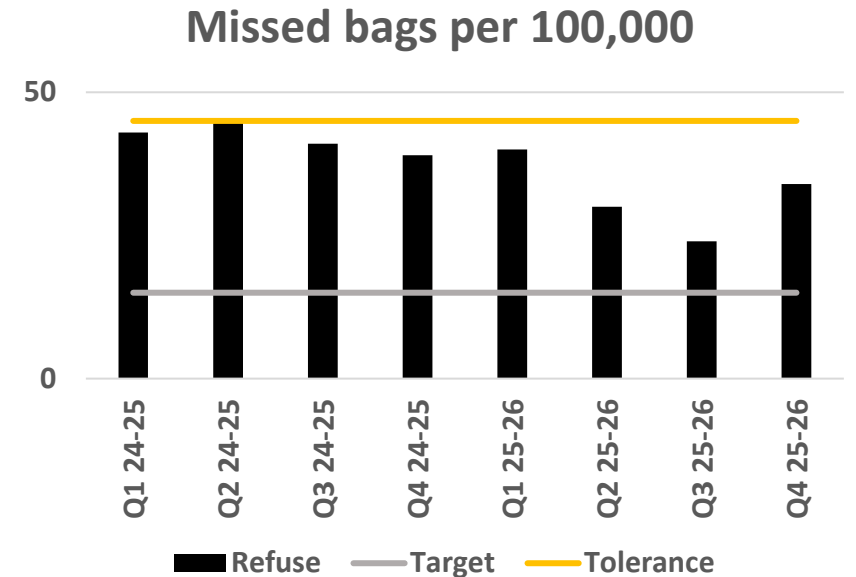
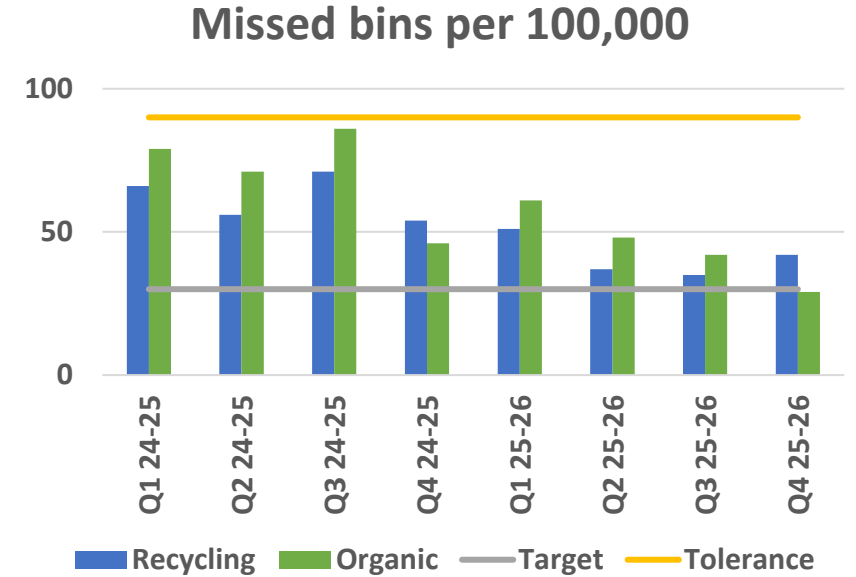
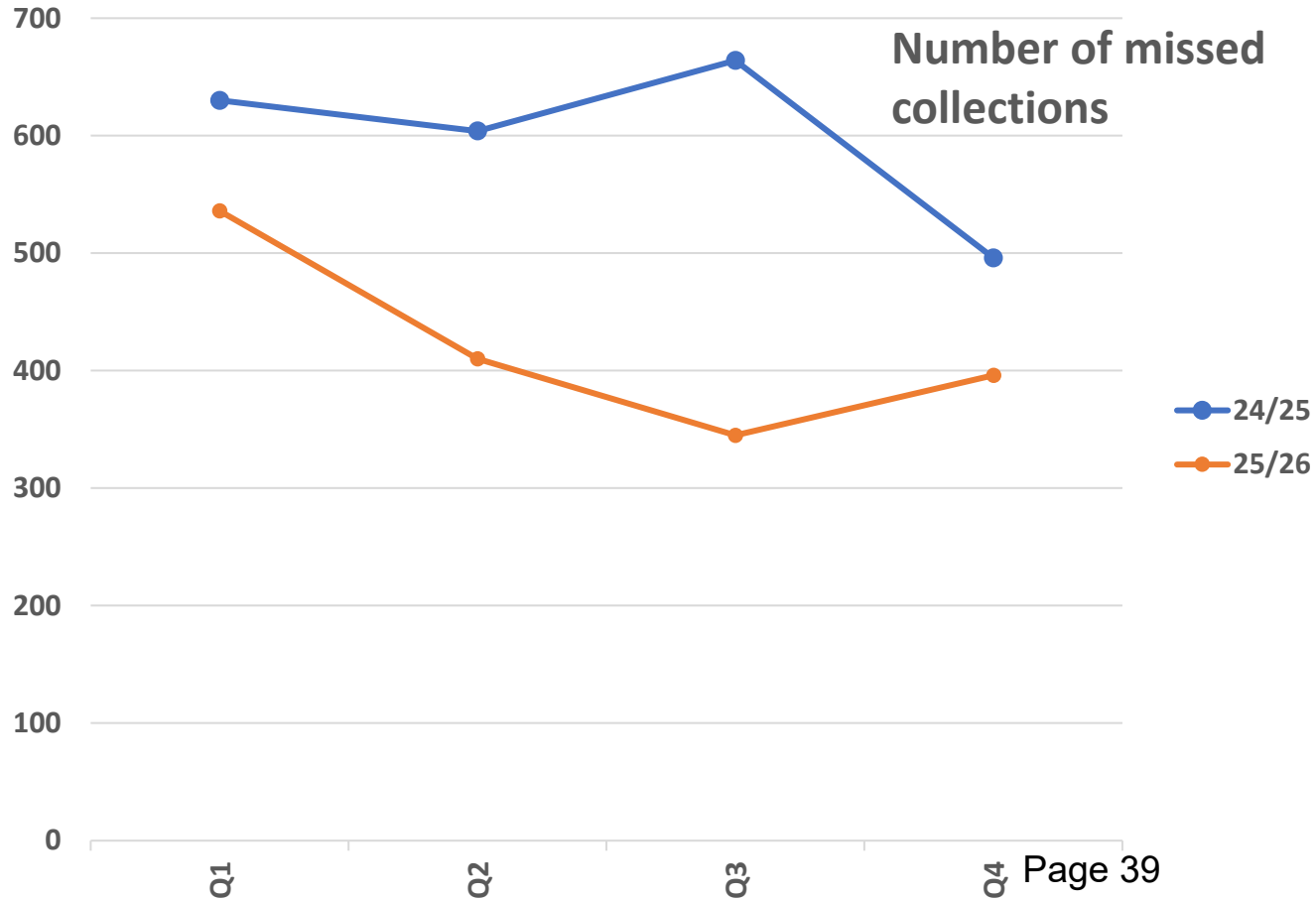


■ 24/25
■ 25/26
— Target



■ Long term
■ Short Term

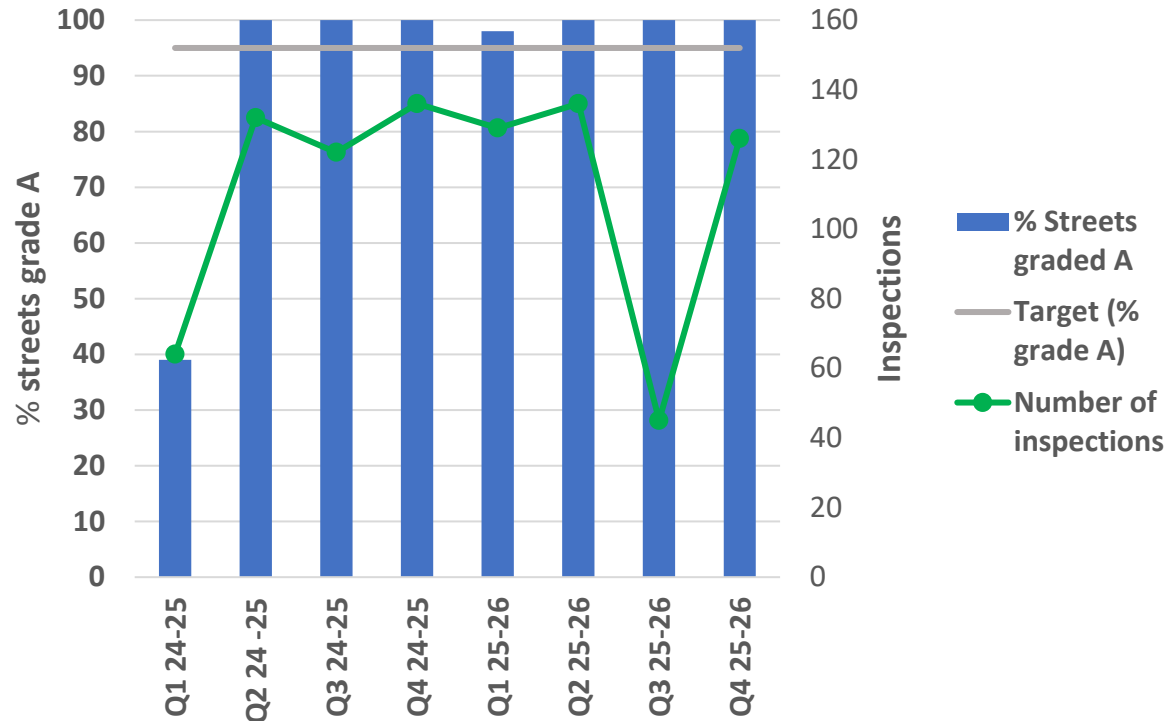
Cleaner, Greener East Cambridgeshire
 Keep the environment of East Cambridgeshire, clean and presentable



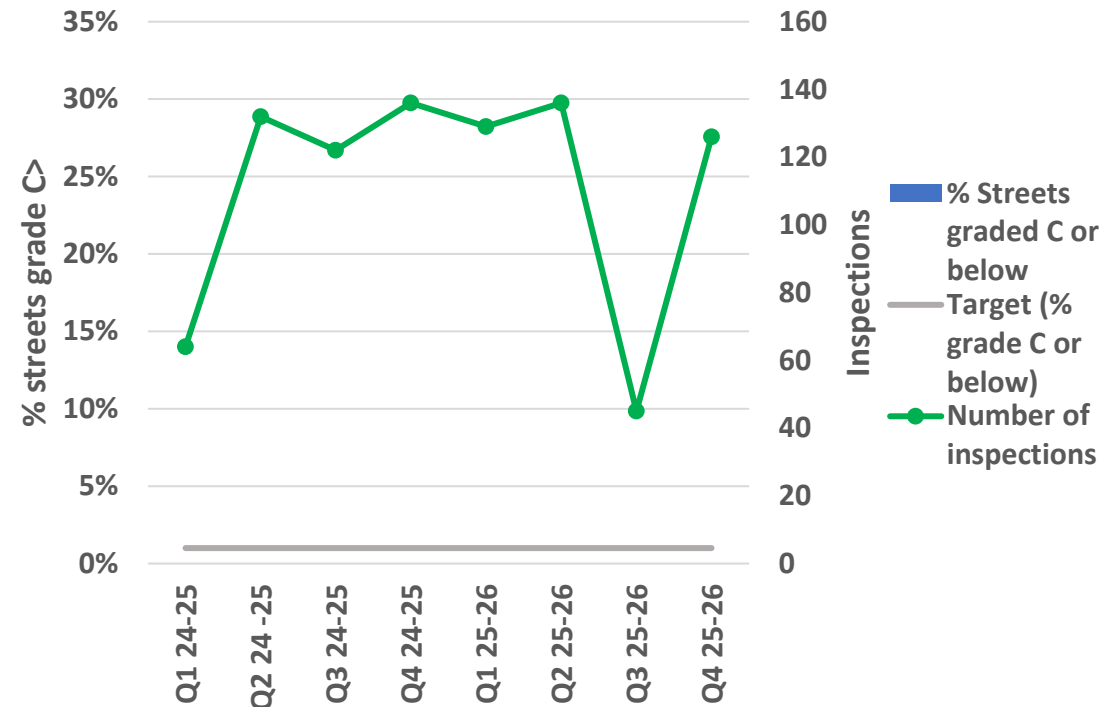
Cleaner, Greener East Cambridgeshire

Keep the environment of East Cambridgeshire, clean and presentable

Average monthly clean streets graded A on random inspection



No. of streets graded C or below for litter on random inspection

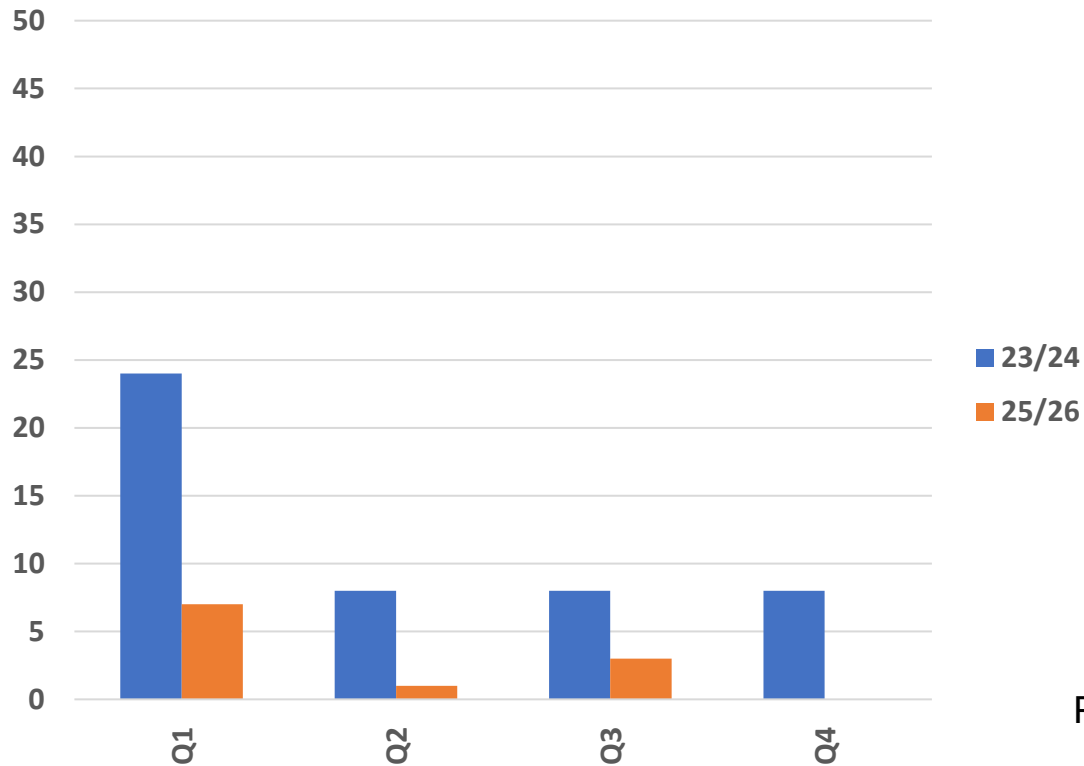




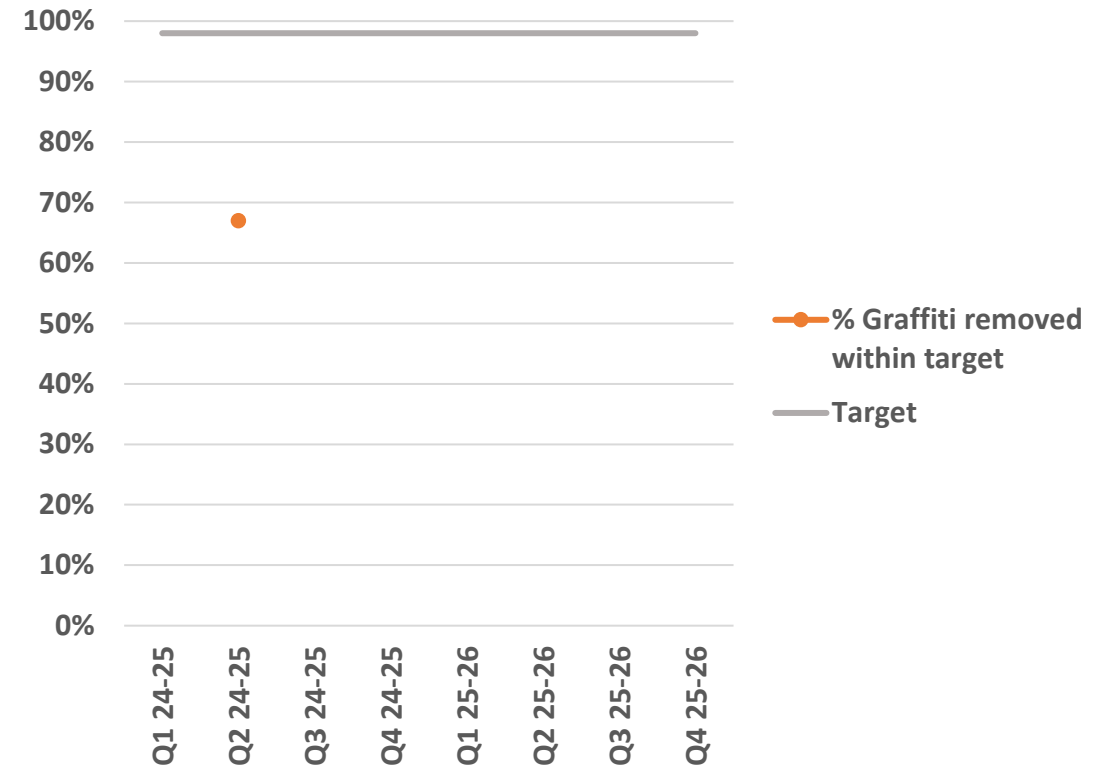
Cleaner, Greener East Cambridgeshire

Maintain a clean and presentable environment by removing graffiti and fly tipped waste from the district

No. reported incidents of all graffiti per month



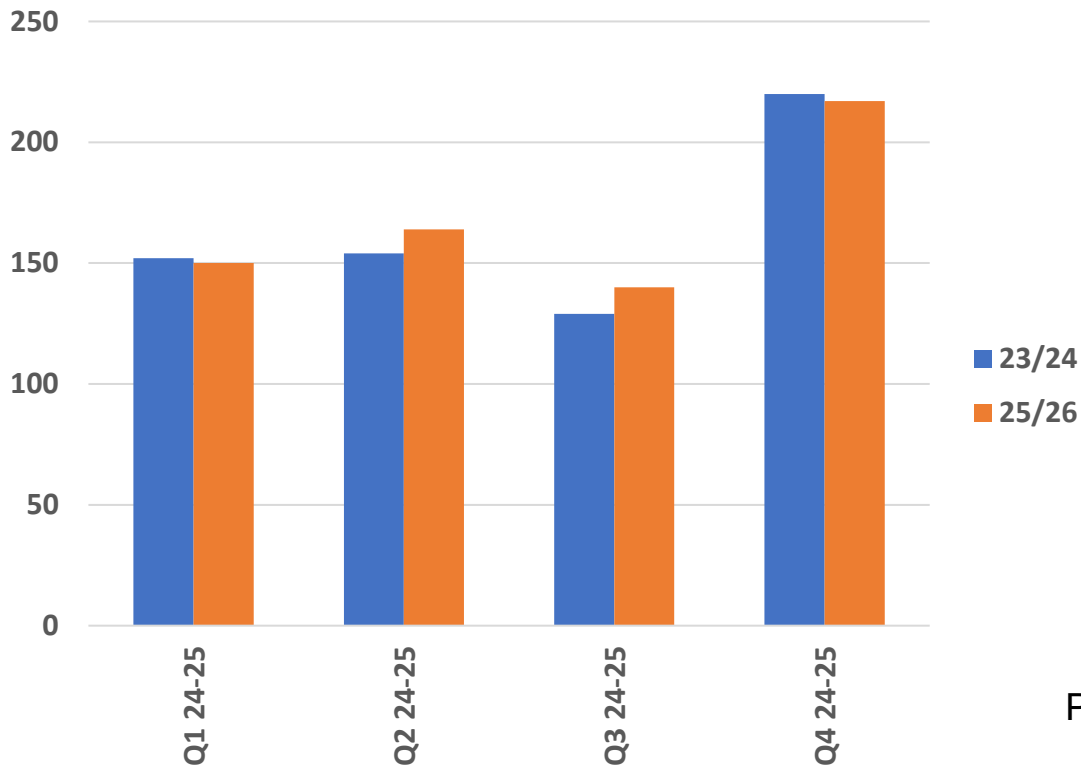
Successful removal of offensive graffiti within 1 working day



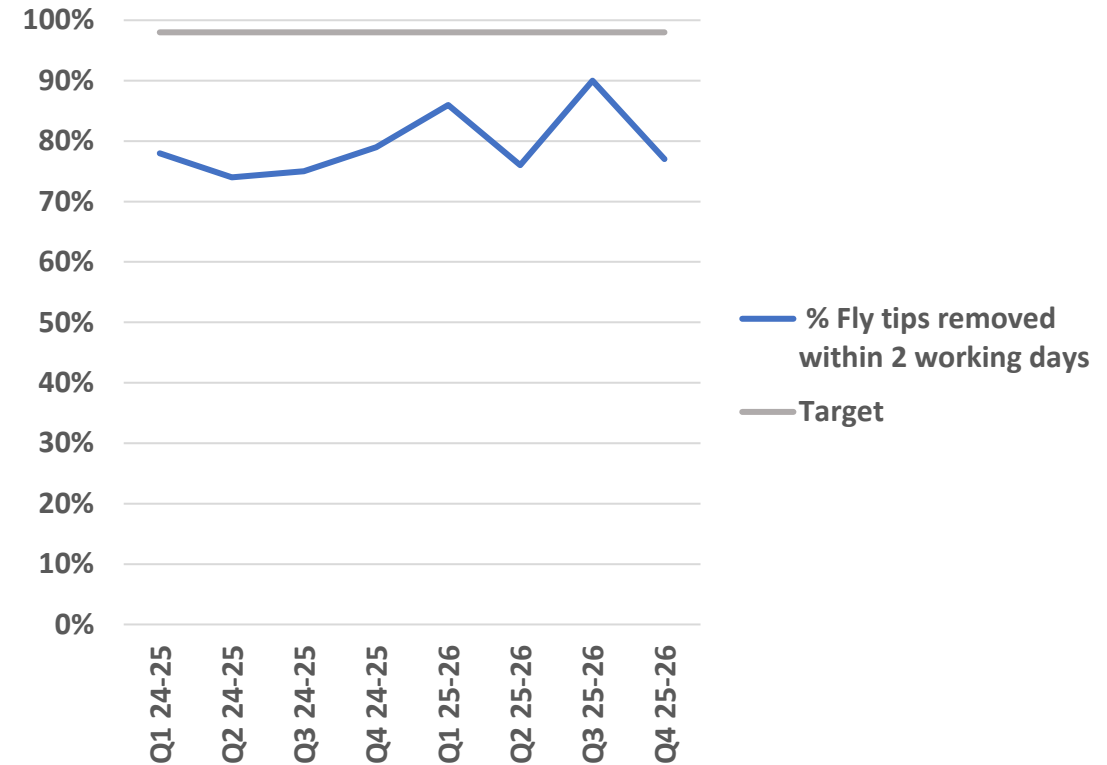
Cleaner, Greener East Cambridgeshire

Maintain a clean and presentable environment by removing graffiti and fly tipped waste from the district

No. reported incidents of fly tips per month



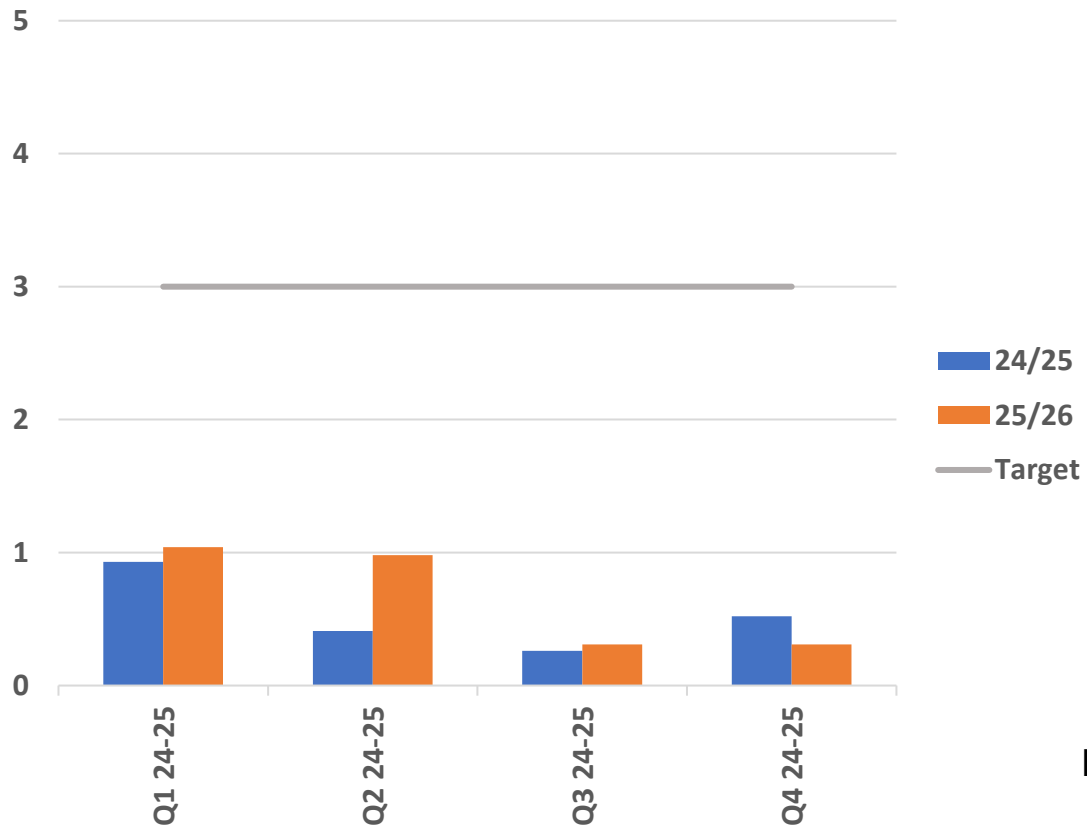
Successful removal of fly tips within 2 working days



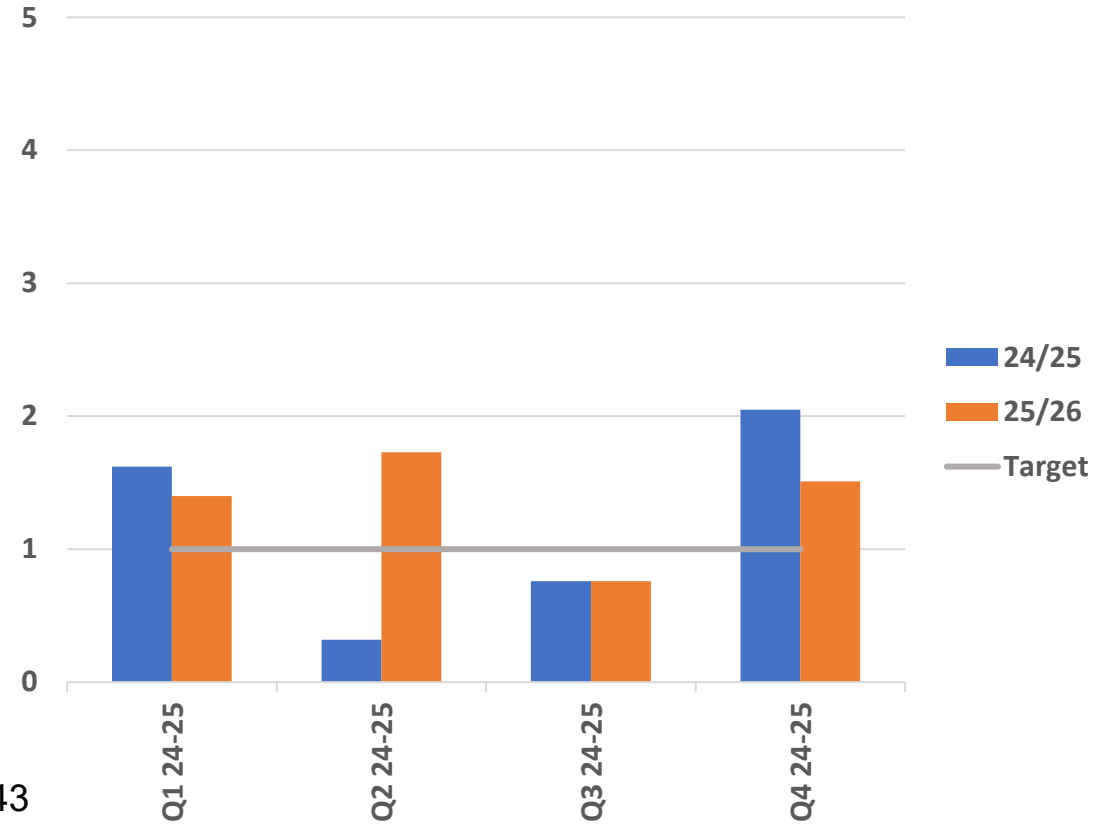
Cleaner, Greener East Cambridgeshire

Overflowing street bins (per 100 bins)

Litter bins

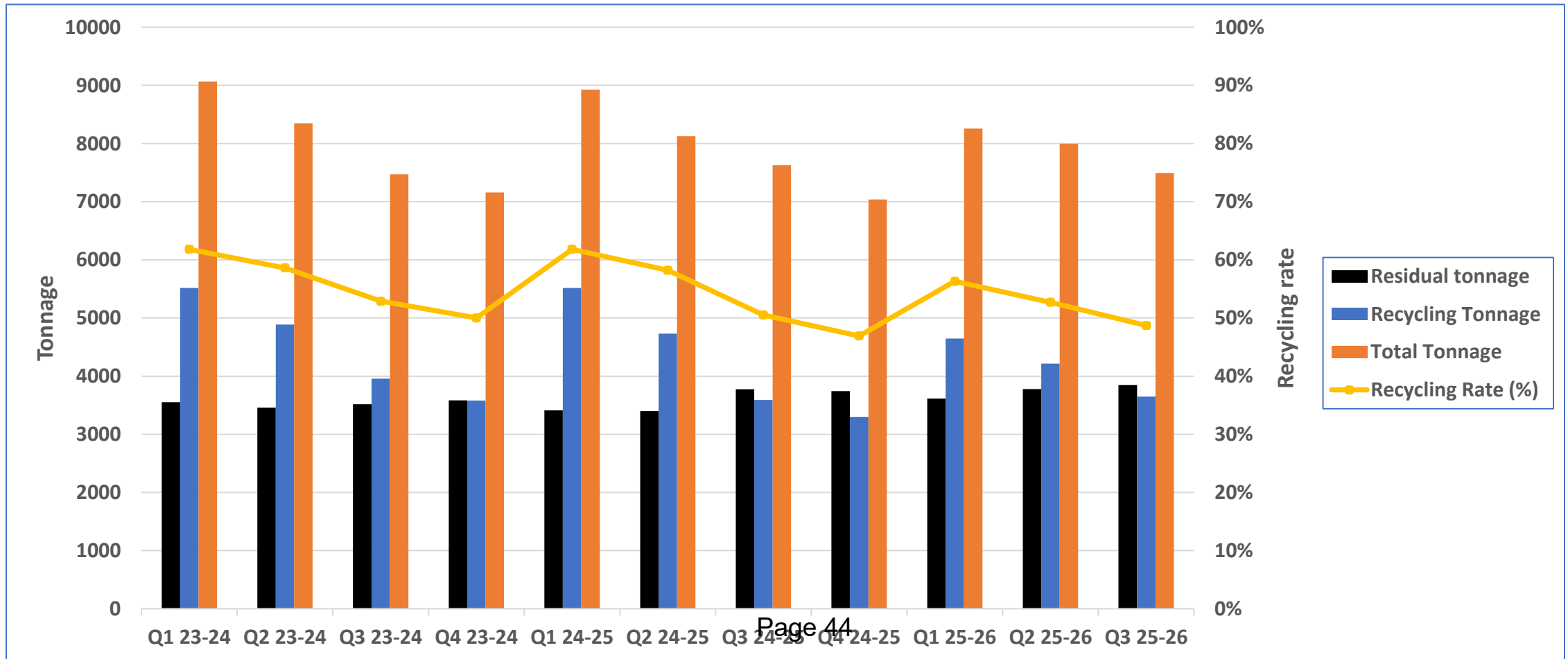


Dog bins



Cleaner, Greener East Cambridgeshire

Reduce waste sent to landfill wherever possible, maximising the district's recycling rate:



TITLE: Long Term Empty Homes Strategy

Committee: Operational Services

Date: 22 June 2026

Author: Waste and Environmental Services Manager

Report number: AB21

Contact officer: Nick Baker, Waste and Environmental Services Manager
Nick.Baker@eastcambs.gov.uk 01353 616095, Annexe 209, The Grange, Ely

Issue

1. In late 2025, a motion was agreed at Full Council, to move forward with a new strategy to address Long Term Empty Properties (LTEs) in the district. The draft strategy is appended to the report and set out in broad terms below.

Recommendations

2. To approve the Long Term Empty Homes Strategy, which covers work in this area over the next two years, and for officers to provide a progress update for the Committee in 6-9 months.

Background/Options

3. The issues surrounding empty homes are well known. Essentially, they are an unused resource at a time of housing shortage. There are many other secondary issues often associated with LTEs; including Council Tax avoidance and nuisance and blight to local neighbourhoods. These issues often run across different services and a coordinated approach is therefore required to effectively deal with them.
4. The Council has appointed Adam Cliff from the Empty Homes Network to develop the strategy, which sets out what is generally accepted as the best way to address the issue of empty properties, with particular focus on LTEs. In addition, he will undertake work to a review and progress our existing LTE cases.

Adam produced the LGA good practice guidance on dealing with these issues, having wide experience in this area of work.

5. The strategy recommends a progressive and sequential approach which is flexible according to the issues affecting each property. These might include the owner's willingness to move forward, money owed to public bodies, the physical state of the property and the impact the property is having on other properties and the local community.

Importantly the strategy seeks to engage with owners of LTEs wherever possible but also recognises the need for formal action with uncooperative owners and or where there are urgent circumstances relating to the property.

6. The key objectives of the strategy are shown in the table below:

Objective 1 - To build and maintain an accurate empty homes database		
Ref	Action	Success Criteria and Outcomes
OB1	Undertake monthly data matching and cleansing using Council Tax and internal systems to ensure all records reflect current property status and ownership	Database reviewed monthly, with discrepancies identified and resolved, achieving and maintaining data accuracy
OB2	Record and track all complaints, referrals and inspection outcomes within a centralised system to support consistent case management	100% of cases logged within 5 working days, with clear audit trails and regular updates recorded
OB3	Strengthen data sharing arrangements with internal teams and relevant external partners to improve intelligence and case identification	Formal data-sharing protocols in place, reviewed annually, with evidence of regular information exchange
Objective 2 - To identify and prioritise empty homes for progressive action		
OB4	Apply a structured, risk-based scoring matrix to all priority empty homes cases to ensure a consistent and transparent process	100% of active priority cases scored, with priority levels clearly recorded and regularly reviewed
OB5	Undertake quarterly reviews of high-risk categories, including long-term empty homes, high Council Tax arrears, and frequently complained-about properties	Updated priority lists produced quarterly, with changes in risk status clearly documented
OB6	Maintain and actively manage a targeted list of high-priority properties requiring intervention	All priority cases show evidence of ongoing action, engagement or escalation where appropriate
Objective 3 - Provide advice, assistance and guidance to empty home owners		

OB7	Develop, publish and regularly update guidance materials to inform owners of their responsibilities, options and available support	Guidance is accessible online, reviewed annually, and reflects current legislation and local policy
OB8	Proactively engage with owners through written correspondence, telephone contact and site visits to encourage action	Initial contact made within 10 working days of case allocation, with follow-up activity recorded
OB9	Signpost owners to relevant financial assistance, legal advice, and property improvement services where appropriate	Evidence of advice and support options provided in at least 90% of applicable cases
Objective 4 – To reduce numbers, and return problematic empty homes back into use		
OB10	Work collaboratively with owners to secure voluntary solutions, including sale, letting, or refurbishment of empty properties	Demonstrable year-on-year reduction in long-term empty homes across the district
OB11	Escalate cases to formal enforcement action where voluntary engagement fails, in line with Council policy and legislation	Enforcement action initiated in qualifying high-risk cases, with clear progression recorded
OB12	Collaborate with internal departments and external partners to address complex or high-impact empty homes	Reduction in complaints and environmental issues linked to targeted properties
Objective 5 - To maximise income opportunities, including council tax and enforcement debt recovery		
OB13	Ensure empty homes and second homes premiums are applied consistently and accurately to all eligible properties	100% of qualifying properties correctly identified and charged, with minimal error rates
OB14	Identify and reinstate properties previously exempt or removed from the Council Tax list once they become liable	Year-on-year increase in properties returned to the tax base, supported by audit records
OB15	Actively pursue council tax and enforcement debt linked to empty homes through coordinated recovery processes	Measurable reduction in arrears levels and improved recovery rates year-on-year

7. The original motion contained some specific expectations to come out of the strategy which will be covered as follows:

a) *ambitious and realistic district targets to reduce long-term empty homes and return them to use*

Whilst such targets can only be set after the proposed database is completed and cases investigated, experience from other councils suggests that a reduction in current LTEs of around 20% should be achievable. Progress will be reported to members once work has commenced.

b) *the list of the full range of fiscal levers, including council tax premium rates, published local exemptions and deferrals for active renovation.*

These are referred to within the strategy as options for use as cases require.

In addition, the motion required consideration of the following:

c) *a revolving Empty Homes Loan Fund to finance works to bring empty homes back to habitable standard.*

This can be considered once an accurate picture of LTEs in the district is obtained and will be reported to members at that time.

d) *an expanded enforcement capacity (including training and legal support) to deploy Empty Dwelling Management Orders and targeted Compulsory Purchase Orders for persistently problematic properties.*

There will be a need for such support, but most likely, for other processes, such as Enforced Sale.

e) *an Empty Homes Partnership with local housing associations, community-led housing groups and social enterprises to support owners to bring properties up to standard and explore external funds to underwrite conversions.*

This can be considered once an accurate picture of LTEs in the district is obtained and will be reported to members at that time

f) *the associated cost and Return on Investment justification of an Empty Homes Officer function along with a review of case management systems.*

Officers have agreed a two year arrangement and related budget to procure expertise in this area of work.

g) *the resourcing, associated costs and justification of a public "Report an Empty" portal and matchmaker service for buyers and renovators, and publish a quarterly dashboard, in line with LGA best practice.*

Initially, it is intended to promote the reporting arrangement, before considering other services

h) *Following the adoption of a new Empty Homes Strategy, run an annual communications campaign during Empty Homes Week to showcase success stories and promote offers and enforcement.*

This will be undertaken for the next Empty Homes Week in early 2027 but officers anticipate wider promotion of this initiative before that time.

8. The strategy also contains an initial plan for undertaking this work, based on the objectives above, as follows:

	Workstream	Objectives Achieved
Phase 1 – Establishing the baseline		
June – Sept 2026	Develop and populate a comprehensive empty homes database using Council Tax data, historic records, and referrals, ensuring all known cases are captured	Objectives 1 and 2
	Categorise and risk-rate all priority properties using the agreed scoring matrix to identify high, medium, and low priority cases	
	Undertake site visits to all high-priority properties to verify status, gather intelligence, and record condition and occupancy evidence	
Phase 2 – Case Building		
Sept – Dec 2026	Identify properties with significant Council Tax arrears and begin detailed casework in collaboration with ARP Revenues and Recovery teams and external legal support.	Objectives 1, 2 and 5
	Review properties currently subject to exemptions or discounts to confirm eligibility and identify opportunities for reinstatement	
	Initiate early actions to maximise revenue, including correcting liability, applying premiums, and preparing cases for recovery	
Phase 3 – Owner engagement and support		
Dec – May 2027	Implement a structured three-stage letter process to engage all owners of empty homes, encouraging dialogue and action	Objectives 3, 4, 5
	Develop and promote a clear package of advice, guidance, and support options, including financial assistance and partnership opportunities	
	Establish links with internal departments and external partners (e.g. housing, enforcement, agents) to support owners in bringing properties back into use	

Phase 4 – Intervention and escalation		
May – Dec 2027	Review progress across all cases, updating risk ratings and prioritisation based on engagement and outcomes achieved	Objectives 1, 2 and 4
	Progress high-priority and non-compliant cases toward appropriate enforcement action, in line with policy and legislation	
	Continue proactive engagement with newly identified empty homes while maintaining database accuracy and regular updates	
Phase 5 – Enforcement and delivery		
Dec 2027 – June 2028	Finalise and implement enforcement action plans for the most challenging and long-term empty homes	Objectives 2, 4 and 5
	Progress formal enforcement measures where necessary, including legal and financial remedies to secure reoccupation	
	Monitor outcomes, including reductions in empty homes and recovery of debt, and embed learning into ongoing service delivery	

9. Officers are of the view that this programme of work will take the council forward in this work area and with modest resource, ensure that the Council has an accurate database of LTEs and has commenced work in bring back as many as possible into use.

Additional Implications Assessment

10. In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

Financial Implications Yes	Legal Implications No	Human Resources (HR) Implications Yes
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) No	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) No	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) No

Financial implications

CMT approval given for provision of consultancy services, by the Empty Homes Network, funded from reserves.

HR Implications

HMRC assessment of off payroll working completed successfully.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Motion to Council November 2025

Tackling Long-Term Empty Homes

Council notes:

- Long-Term Empty Homes, as defined by the government in the Local Government Finance Act 1992¹ (as amended), are a national problem that need a local solution.
- The number of long-term empty homes (empty for 6+ months) in the district: 528 (Sept 2022), 546 (Sept 2023), 531 (Sept 2024), 473 (Sept 2025)—a recent improvement, but still a significant wasted housing resource.
- The council's most recent Empty Homes Strategy was adopted in 2006 and despite being linked on the council's website is believed to be no longer live.
- The council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy dates from 2022 and is based on other policies which expired in 2017 and 2021.
- The fiscal levers available to councils to deal with the problem of long-term empty homes include, but are not limited to, compulsory purchase orders, Long-Term Empty Property premiums and Empty Dwelling Management Orders.

Council believes:

- That bringing empty homes back into use can play a key part in local strategies to meet housing need. Not only are empty homes a wasted resource, but they are often the subject of complaints and frustration for communities, as well as being a catalyst for crime and degradation².
- That effective action on bringing empty homes back into use is among the fastest and best-value ways to increase supply, cut blight, and improve access to housing in East Cambridgeshire.
- A modernised strategy should combine support incentives with proportionate and compassionate enforcement, learning from councils that have delivered results.

Council resolves to:

1. Direct Officers to develop a new Empty Homes Strategy by July 2026, replacing the 2006 and 2022 documents, with clear targets, resourcing, and an annual public report and present this to Operational Services committee for review and onward recommendation to full Council. This strategy to include:
 - a) ambitious and realistic district targets to reduce long-term empty homes and return them to use
 - b) the list of the full range of fiscal levers, including council tax premium rates, published local exemptions and deferrals for active renovation.

2. As part of a new Empty Homes Strategy, develop a business case and options for the resources required to implement the strategy, including investigation into:
 - a) a revolving Empty Homes Loan Fund to finance works to bring empty homes back to habitable standard.
 - b) an expanded enforcement capacity (including training and legal support) to deploy Empty Dwelling Management Orders and targeted Compulsory Purchase Orders for persistently problematic properties.
 - c) an Empty Homes Partnership with local housing associations, community-led housing groups and social enterprises to support owners to bring properties up to standard and explore external funds to underwrite conversions.
 - d) the associated cost and Return on Investment justification of an Empty Homes Officer function along with a review of case management systems.
 - e) the resourcing, associated costs and justification of a public “Report an Empty” portal and matchmaker service for buyers and renovators, and publish a quarterly dashboard, in line with LGA best practice.

3. Following the adoption of a new Empty Homes Strategy, run an annual communications campaign during Empty Homes Week to showcase success stories and promote offers and enforcement.

Appendix 2

Long Term Empty Homes Strategy

Background documents

none



East Cambridgeshire District Council

East Cambridgeshire District Council

Empty Homes Strategy

2026 - 2028

(Draft v.1 | May 2026)

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Appendix G – Empty Homes Procedure / Flowchart

1. Introduction

This is East Cambridgeshire District Council's first Empty Homes Strategy since 2006, covering the period through to April 2028.

This strategy aims to give an understanding of the issues vacant houses can cause, how they impact residents and communities, and how the Council intends to approach these issues, in order to bring more empty homes back into use. This is especially important for those which have been empty for over six months and are considered long term empty properties (LTEs).

The strategy looks at why homes become empty, what advice and assistance is available to empty home owners, and how the Council intends to effect change and prompt action.

Empty homes can be detrimental to the lives of local residents and communities for a number of reasons. A single empty home can blight a street or community, reduce surrounding property values and be a catalyst for nuisance to local residents. Empty homes can also attract vandalism, fly-tipping and other criminal activity, ranging from the minor to the extremely serious. They also represent a risk for the emergency services and put added pressure on council departments such as Housing and Environmental Health.

Homes can become and remain empty for a number of reasons. Whether financial pressures, legal or administrative delays or pending refurbishments, empty homes and their owners often face challenging and difficult circumstances that can prevent properties from being fully utilised. Supporting owners in overcoming such hurdles where it is their intention to do so, and tackling those empty homes where there are no reasonable prospects of positive action from their owners, will positively impact our residents, both by increasing the housing supply but also the wider community for whom empty homes often cause the most problems.

Across East Cambridgeshire, the Council Taxbase records show there were 1,354 empty homes in November 2025, of which 470 were LTEs. Equating to 3.25% of the district's housing stock, this represents a significant waste of a limited resource, at a time when housing supply is not meeting increased demand.

Of this, Council Tax records show 223 properties are currently liable for the Empty Homes Premium, meaning they have remained empty for a period of 12 months or more. However, statistical information is limited, and it is recognised that there are a number of empty homes where full Council Tax is being paid and the property is not registered as empty.

Similarly, records show that East Cambridgeshire currently has 294 second homes, and 303 unoccupied exempt properties, reported as such by their owners in order to obtain discounted Council Tax charges, or exemptions for legitimate reasons.

The benefits of implementing an Empty Homes Strategy are wide ranging, and can be categorised as social, regenerative, financial and strategic.

In supporting these key areas through bringing empty homes back into use, this strategy aims to:

- assist in meeting housing need
- improve housing conditions
- assist with a reduction in crime and the fear of crime
- address properties causing localised blight
- increase Council Tax collection rates and empty home premiums
- maximise income and revenue opportunities, and recover debts

The case for dealing with empty homes is a compelling one, not only from a neighbourhood improvement and housing perspective, but also as a financial incentive both for the owners of empty homes, and for the authority.

This strategy covers the Council's intentions in supporting and assisting owners of empty homes, along with the available tools and enforcement options at the authority's disposal, should support and negotiation prove insufficient. In tackling the most challenging of cases, it is the Council's aim to reduce the numbers of empty homes across the district, regenerate unused and vacant properties, and reinvigorate communities for the benefit of our residents.

2. Background to Empty Homes

2.1 What is an empty home?

A dwelling is considered to be a long-term empty home if it has been unoccupied for 6 months or longer. Privately owned, long-term empty homes are the focus of this strategy, but concerns will be highlighted to public bodies and housing associations (registered providers) where an empty home they own requires attention.

Empty homes can be found in all areas, wards and locations across the district, and are not necessarily semi-derelict, boarded up or causing a problem. There are also large numbers of homes which naturally become empty for periods of time, perhaps due to transactional processes, being between tenants, or when an owner passes away, and the probate process delays a transaction. When a dwelling remains empty for a significant period of time, is attracting unwanted attention or is the subject of a complaint to the authority, it would be considered a high priority case in line with the rating system attached as Appendix B, and held within the Council's empty homes database as a priority property.

Whilst these properties are often recorded as empty through their Council Tax accounts, it is also often the case that second homes, those that qualify for an unoccupied exemption, or even where a property is reported as occupied, can be referred to the authority as empty and unoccupied. All referrals, complaints and notifications will be recorded and investigated as empty homes, until such time that our enquiries find that the property is in fact occupied or otherwise sufficiently used.

2.2 Why do properties become and remain empty?

There are a number of reasons why properties could become and remain empty. These include:

- The property is difficult to sell or let due to its physical state and condition
- It is currently being renovated, or the owners has plans to refurbish or develop the property
- The owner does not have the capacity/finances/time/skills to manage or maintain the property
- The property has been, or is in the process of being repossessed
- Where the previous owner has passed away, leading to an often time-consuming administrative procedure around probate
- The owner is being cared for elsewhere, is in hospital or has been moved into a home/care
- The property has been abandoned by the owner and/or the owner is untraceable
- When a property is left empty due to speculative investment, through acquiring a property
- Where probate has been granted and the beneficiary is yet to decide on future plans
- Where the property is adjoined to or forms part of a business, and the owner does not wish to let or sell
- Accidental landlords, where partners co-habit leaving a second property empty

It is important that the Council understands why individual properties become and/or remain empty, along with the owner's circumstances and intentions in order to tailor and deliver our support and assistance appropriately.

2.3 Challenges presented by empty homes

Dealing with an empty home is not always straightforward. Each property, its owner, their circumstances and intentions are all unique. For example:

- A property may be used as a second home, and so not occupied on a permanent basis but is still in use.
- It may be that non-residential space often found above shops is being used for storage or other business related matters, and although not immediately obvious, it is in use.

- There may be properties awaiting planning permission and work is unable to commence whilst this is being sought. This may include specialist permissions if they are a Listed Building or located in a Conservation Area.
- A property may be owned by a number of different people or companies.
- The property may be subject to legal proceedings such as probate, divorce settlements, repossession or proceeds of crime restrictions.
- Although it is now compulsory in England to register any property which changes ownership or has a mortgage taken out against it for the first time, properties which have not changed ownership since that time may not be registered with the Land Registry and information regarding the property will not be available from this source.
- It may not be immediately evident who the owner of a property is or where they are, as they may have moved away with little information available to trace them.
- Some properties are deliberately kept empty by the owner for specific reasons such as for their children when they leave home or elderly relatives who are in care. Some are kept empty until the owner feels the housing market is suitable to sell the property at the price they want.
- The emotional attachment associated with a property, formerly a family home or owned by parents, can often lead to the reluctance or reticence to take action, or deal with a property immediately.

Some owners are often simply reluctant to engage with the Council, and believe that as the property is privately owned the Council do not have the right to require action to return it to use. They may be unaware, or have no concern for the affect the property has on the local area and surrounding properties. These are properties which are likely to be left empty for many years, fall into disrepair, and be the subject of future complaints and action.

Subsequently, it is considered that the Local Authority is best placed to tackle the issues that empty homes present. With a range of professional experience across departments, legislative powers and tools at their disposal, the Council is able to provide a vehicle for a solutions-based approach that benefits all parties involved.

2.4 Why empty homes matter, and the need for a strategy

The key issue is that empty homes represent a wasted resource, especially in the current climate where housing needs are critical.

In addition, Councils often receive complaints relating to empty homes from local residents, who rightly object to unsightly disused properties. There are resulting implications for the Council's Environmental Health and Housing teams who have to use staff time and resources to investigate a wide range of issues.

For the local community, empty homes can have a direct impact on adjoining properties through issues such as damp and structural problems. Alongside this, unsightly properties can be detrimental to neighbouring house prices and can result in a lack of pride and investment in the area. The possibility of empty homes attracting unwanted attention can also cause added anxiety and ongoing concern for local residents. Empty Homes undermine a community's confidence in the area, resulting in problems for neighbouring properties again leading to involvement from the Local Authority.

For empty homes owners, leaving a property standing empty can become costly and be a source of unnecessary headache. By remaining empty and increasing in deterioration, the additional risk of vandalism and crime can lead to a property being difficult to insure, which could ultimately result in high repair costs or even mean a complete loss of asset.

Even the general deterioration of an unlive in property will result in costs. Deterioration by lack of maintenance, insurance, council tax and premiums, utility standing charges and mortgage payments, all increase the financial liability of leaving a property empty, and one which can often become insurmountable for the owners. By renting or selling the property, not only are the above issues resolved, but there is the added advantage of gaining regular rental income or the capital generated from the sale of a property.

There is also the environmental and sustainable impact of leaving homes empty. It is estimated that it would take the equivalent of 75 acres of land to build 900 homes. This could be greenfield sites of open land that local people value, whereas it would be more efficient and sustainable to make best use of existing dwelling stock available.

Empty homes returned to use as domestic dwellings increase the availability of homes, including potentially affordable homes. Instead of being a source of concern these homes can be transformed from a wasted resource into a home for an individual or family in housing need. There are many individuals and families in housing need, and the utilisation of empty homes could prevent some of these people from facing issues such as homelessness and overcrowding, or provide a first home for a local person.

Returning empty homes to use can help eliminate these issues and ensure that house prices are protected from preventable reductions. Improving an area can also encourage investment in the local economy, and a return of any lost pride in the community created by a single empty home.

This strategy sets out how East Cambridgeshire District Council intends to work with empty homeowners to bring their home back into habitable use, and continue to reduce empty homes as a wasted resource across the district.

3. The National Context

Since 2010 the Government has placed considerable emphasis on the importance of returning empty homes to use. Statistics published in November 2025 in the Council Taxbase for England, put the number of empty homes at 542,276. Of these, 309,856 were classed as LTEs.

Representing 2.1% of the country's total housing stock, the total number of empty homes has consistently risen in recent years, similarly to that of LTEs, showing that 1.20% of the country's housing stock has been empty for six months or more.

Having introduced the Empty Homes Premium in 2013, granting local authorities the power to implement additional levies for properties that remain empty for longer periods, the number of properties liable for such premiums have still increased year on year, resulting in 152,932 properties being reported as being liable for the premium in November 2025. Announced in 2022, and aiming to disincentivise empty homes owners further, the Government's Levelling Up Bill proposed reforms to the Council Tax discount and premium levels, enabling councils to charge the empty homes premium at 12 months, down from the initial 24.

Coupled with this, in 2011 the Government introduced the New Homes Bonus, allowing councils to benefit financially by increasing their net dwellings through building new homes, and bringing back into use those which had remained empty. Under the scheme, the Government match-funded Council Tax receipts for each additional property added to their net dwelling stock for a seven year period, and therefore incentivised local authorities to both build housing and bring those empty back into occupation. However, this incentive has now been withdrawn.

In 2023, The Local Government Association (LGA) in conjunction with The Empty Homes Network, produced a guidance and best practice report entitled "Empty Homes - a practical approach for Councils on dealing with empty homes". Amongst practical and operational guidance for councils, the report recommended that in order to increase engagement and success in bringing empty homes back into use, local authorities should consider:

- developing their understanding and wider prioritisation of the definitions of empty homes, and broadening the scope of empty homes work to include properties classed as second homes and those with an unoccupied council tax exemption
- employing a dedicated resource where possible, in order to progress from a reactive approach to tackling empty homes, through to a proactive approach
- ensure officers and practitioners are equipped and supported with the relevant tools and resources, often already at the council's disposal, such as delegated powers and authority to take enforcement action
- taking a proactive approach to engaging with empty home owners at an earlier stage, where properties are known to have been empty for two or three months, rather than initiating contact after six months

- moving towards wholly proactive approach to empty homes work, where local authorities have often operated a reactive service due to resource, staffing or financial constraints.

In publishing this report, the recommendations offered routes of progression and complimented those published in the Empty Homes, House of Commons Briefing Paper No.3012, released in June 2018, which suggested:

- Local authorities should have an empty homes strategy for their area, with the aspiration to reduce the number of long-term empty homes.
- Local authorities and social housing providers should seek funding and allocate resources to buy and refurbish empty properties for people in housing need.
- Local authorities should take a casework-based approach with owners of long-term empty properties to encourage, advise and support them to bring homes back into housing use. Employing dedicated empty homes staff can ensure that the council is able to act on information about homes, and build up expertise in working with owners, including taking enforcement action where necessary.

1.

2.

2.1

2.2

Whilst there is currently no government-led national strategy to deal with empty homes, the legislation and ability for councils to implement a number of measures places the emphasis on Local Authorities to propose and deliver solutions locally that suit them and their residents.

4.0 The Local Context and Corporate Objectives

4.1 Empty homes statistics across East Cambridgeshire

Currently, the Council Taxbase, released annually in November, is the only available method to determine the number of empty homes across both East Cambridgeshire, and nationally. However, it is accepted that this method does not provide a full and accurate account of the number of empty homes across the district.

To overcome this, a detailed and comprehensive database will be developed in order for the authority to track and monitor data across all empty homes categories and definitions. Whilst this will allow for accurate and up to date statistical reporting, it will also provide the foundation from which cases can be prioritised, properties can be assessed and scored, and reports can be compiled based on wards, length of time empty, and ownership status.

4.2 Total Dwellings

In terms of total housing stock across England, the number of dwellings has increased by 3.32%. In East Cambridgeshire however, the number of dwellings has risen from 38,962 in 2021 to 41,665 in 2025, an increase of 7.68%, outpacing the national average.

Total Dwellings					
Local Authority	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
England	25,817,220	25,675,421	25,462,055	25,225,481	24,987,468
East Cambridgeshire	41,665	41,131	40,495	39,673	38,962
Fenland	48,372	47,856	47,291	46,837	46,457
Uttlesford	40,948	40,449	39,278	39,206	38,839

At the local level, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, and Uttlesford all display similar upward trends, though on a much smaller scale. Fenland maintains the largest stock throughout, growing from 46,457 to 48,372, while East Cambridgeshire and Uttlesford follow comparable trajectories, reaching 41,665 and 40,948 respectively by 2025.

In percentage terms, local growth broadly mirrors national patterns, with modest but consistent year-on-year increases. However, Uttlesford shows slightly more variability between years. Overall, the three authorities track closely with national expansion trends, suggesting stable and sustained housing development across both local and wider contexts.

4.3 Total Empty Homes

The 2025 data for East Cambridgeshire shows that the overall number of empty homes in the district has fallen over the past year, following a period of fluctuation. In 2025, a total of 1,354 properties were recorded as empty, compared with 1,549 in 2024, representing a reduction of 195 properties (around 13%). Over the five-year period since 2021, however, total empty homes have increased by 99, reflecting a longer-term pattern increase alongside year-to-year variation.

Empty homes in East Cambridgeshire accounted for 3.25% of the total housing stock in 2025, down from 3.77% in 2024 and broadly in line with levels seen earlier in the period. While this proportion remains slightly lower than the national average, it still represents a significant number of homes lying unused in a district experiencing ongoing housing and affordability challenges.

The breakdown between short-term and long-term empty homes provides important insight into the nature of vacancy locally. In 2025, 470 homes were empty for more than six months, down from 539 in 2024, but still higher than the 411 recorded in 2021. This indicates that long-term empty homes remain a persistent feature of the local housing landscape. Short-term empties stood at 287 properties in 2025, also showing a reduction on the previous year.

Empty Homes Statistics					
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
Total Dwellings	41,665	41,131	40,495	39,673	38,962
Empty Homes	757	888	829	829	713
Second Homes	294	279	246	247	217
Unoccupied Exemptions	303	382	372	327	325
Total Empty Homes	1,354	1,549	1,447	1,403	1,255
% of total housing Stock	3.25%	3.77%	3.57%	3.54%	3.22%
Empty Homes Breakdown					
<6 Months Empty	287	349	283	348	302
>6 Months Empty	470	539	546	481	411
Empty Homes Premium	223	279	159	142	170

4.4 Locating empty homes and the empty homes database

In order to compile the Council's comprehensive database of empty homes information, the Council should look to a variety of sources to ensure their data and information held is as accurate as possible.

Primarily, the Council uses existing information held on empty homes in the form of Council Tax data. The Council will also use other means to identify potential empty homes, including information from the electoral register and Land Registry. Residents, neighbours, Council departments, Councillors and partner organisations will be encouraged to report empty homes to the council, especially when there are issues or complaints.

The Council will ensure that an empty homes database is developed, maintained and regularly updated with any relevant and new information received being passed to relevant teams to ensure transparency and accuracy throughout the Council.

Council Tax data also needs to be shared with relevant teams who have an interest in empty properties. Specific permissions were introduced in the Local Government Act 2003 to enable Council Tax data to be used for the sole purpose of bringing empty properties back into use, as well as the general powers already available to share data for investigations relating to criminal matters and so on.

It is important that homeowners keep their Council Tax records up to date, as a home may be recorded as empty following refurbishments, sales or probate, when it is in fact occupied and wider discussions will be held with the Council's Council Tax collection service to encourage this.

4.5 Priority properties

Consisting of the most prominent empty homes, those empty for the longest periods and those where the authority have received complaints or referrals, East Cambridgeshire will develop an active list of higher priority cases within its operational database. In prioritising the caseload, this will allow staff involved to focus their efforts and capacity on those that require the most attention or have highest concern.

These properties may initially be recorded within the general database under an alternative category. However, a referral, complaint, a significant deterioration in condition or an urgent health and safety concern would warrant the property being escalated to a priority level case potentially in parallel with the individual issue being dealt with on its own merits.

This list can also include occasions where a property is referred to the authority, but records show that this may not be the case, such as where an owner has failed to register a property as empty, or where a property has been removed its Council Tax banding.

The Council's list of higher priority cases, can potentially be in any category of ownership but are likely to include properties that fall under any of the following:

- currently being charged some level of empty homes premium
- at various stages of the probate process
- classed as Second Homes for Council Tax purposes
- falling under a Council Tax unoccupied exemption
- that are fully exempt from Council Tax, having been delisted

4.6 Probate cases

Properties recorded on the authority's database as probate cases, are those which have been through the probate process and their period for a Class F exemption has elapsed. These properties are now in the ownership or responsibility of their beneficiaries or estate executors, and are no longer under the restrictions that the probate process may impose.

4.7 Housing associations and companies

Not restricted to including properties that are owned by individuals, the Council's empty homes database will also contain details and information of properties owned by housing associations and companies.

These properties are categorised separately as such, as any engagement with either a housing association or company is likely to be with a secretary or senior figure within the organisation, and therefore any correspondence is adapted to suit.

4.8 Private individuals

The largest category on the database will likely be that where properties are owned by private individuals. The most likely source of quick-wins or where houses are naturally brought back into use, this category can also include instances where the owner is charged any level of empty homes premium, although the longer-term empty and more challenging cases, will likely be held on the priority case list.

4.9 Second homes

Although not often included within national total or long-term empty homes figures, referrals and complaints are often made to the council concerning properties classed as second homes. within the wider database, and any future referrals received where a property is classed as such, can be subsequently moved to be considered a priority case where applicable. For this reason, the number of second homes will be tracked and monitored

The second homes data shows a contrasting picture to empty homes, with national and local trends diverging in recent years and clear variation between the similar authorities.

Second Homes					
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
England	268,153	279,870	263,318	256,913	253,357
East Cambridgeshire	217	236	293	274	248
Fenland	219	262	224	176	182
Uttlesford	236	180	191	178	179

Over the five-year period, second home numbers show a more variable pattern compared to overall dwelling growth, both nationally and locally. Across England, totals rise overall from 253,357 in 2021 to 268,153 in 2025, but with a notable peak in 2024 (279,870) followed by a decline.

Locally, trends are less consistent and diverge more clearly from the national picture. East Cambridgeshire peaks in 2023 (293) before declining sharply to 217 by 2025, suggesting a contraction in second home ownership. Fenland shows fluctuations, increasing overall from 182 to 219 but with a spike in 2024 (262) and a subsequent drop. Uttlesford, by contrast, records a gradual upward trend overall, ending higher in 2025 (236) despite a dip in 2024.

Whilst the Council recognises there are genuine and legitimate reasons for properties to be used as a second home, there are instances where a second home reported as empty, becomes the source for complaints and concern. Where this is the case, the Council will refer to both Empty Homes Strategy and other enforcement policies, to engage and encourage homeowners if we receive complaints.

Owners who cannot demonstrate the use of the property as a second home will be investigated in line with the Empty Homes Strategy. The below examples of evidence could be used to support the use of the property as a second home if requested by the authority:

- **Gas usage.** Copies of actual (not estimated) gas bills for the last 12 months showing the property in use for a minimum six months of the calendar year. Use may constitute 26 weekends throughout the year or midweek usage equivalent to six months usage.
- **Electric usage.** Copies of actual (not estimated) electric bills for the last 12 months showing the property in use for a minimum six months of the calendar year. Use may constitute 26 weekends through the year OR midweek usage equivalent to 6 months usage.
- **Water usage.** Copies of water meter reading bills (not set tariff) for the last 12 months showing the property in use for a minimum six months of the calendar year. Use may constitute 26 weekends through the year OR midweek usage equivalent to six months usage.

- **Booking Confirmations.** Copies of booking confirmations for use of property as a holiday home, or equivalent information.
- **Officer inspection.** A council officer inspection to help evidence the property's internal condition and suggest use as a second home.

4.10 Unoccupied exemptions

Similarly to second homes, properties falling under an unoccupied exemption category are often not included within wider empty homes statistics, but their condition and vacancy may warrant complaints and further investigation. Therefore, these properties are to be monitored within the wider database and include instances of properties that are currently going through probate, where the owner is in prison or property has been repossessed, and in other cases such as where an owner has moved to provide or receive care. (Appendix F)

Currently, statistics show there are 303 properties across the district that qualify for an unoccupied exemption, broken down into the relevant categories shown in the table below:

Unoccupied Exemptions						
Class	Definition	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
B	Owned by a charity	59	96	81	85	87
D	Owner in prison	2	0	3	2	3
E	Owner receiving care	58	70	89	65	50
F	Owner is deceased	172	198	187	161	171
G	Occupation Prohibited	1	1	1	3	3
H	Left by a minister of religion	0	0	1	0	0
I	Owner moved to receive care	6	11	6	9	10
J	Owner moved to provide care	0	1	1	1	0
K	Last occupied by a student	0	1	0	0	0
L	Property repossessed	5	4	3	1	1
Q	Property owner bankrupt	0	0	0	0	0

Total	303	382	372	327	325
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Over the five-year period, unoccupied exemptions in East Cambridgeshire show a fluctuating but overall slightly declining trend. Total exemptions rise from 325 in 2021 to a peak of 382 in 2024, before falling notably to 303 in 2025, indicating a recent reduction after several years of relative stability.

Across categories, properties classified under “owner is deceased” (Class F) consistently account for the largest share, though numbers vary, peaking at 198 in 2024 before dropping to 172 in 2025. “Owned by a charity” (Class B) also shows variability, declining overall from 87 in 2021 to 59 in 2025 despite a temporary increase in 2024. Meanwhile, “owner receiving care” (Class E) rises to a high in 2023 before easing back.

Other categories remain minimal and relatively stable, contributing little to overall change. Overall, the data suggests that shifts in a few key categories drive most variation in total exemptions over time.

4.11 Properties empty under six months

Whilst it is considered best practice to monitor figures and consider properties as long-term empty after a six-month period, it is also important to track the number of properties empty for six months or less. Currently standing at 287 cases, this information will be held within the database, in order to monitor properties reaching the six month stage, and to proactively prepare for those when they get to this period, thus enabling an early intervention.

4.12 Properties returned to use – With Intervention

Also held within the empty homes database, are statistics and information on properties that have been brought back to use with some form of involvement from the authority. Whilst this is not a requirement imposed on the authority by central government, these statistics can be used to track and monitor performance internally, as well as to set annual targets for numbers of properties brought back into use.

4.13 Properties returned to use – Without Intervention

Where properties are naturally brought back into use, or have become occupied after a period of vacancy without council intervention, these properties are logged within the database in order to ascertain trends or patterns, having previously been logged within the database as active cases.

4.14 Meeting corporate objectives

Whilst returning empty homes to use will not solve a wider housing supply issue in isolation, they can often be a quick and cost-effective way of increasing the supply of good quality, safe and affordable housing. Reducing the requirement to build on greenbelt land, regenerating brownfield sites and reinvigorating communities, bringing

empty homes back into use can play a significant part in meeting the Council's wider corporate objectives, and benefitting the residents across East Cambridgeshire.

This strategy, its aims and objectives, links with a variety of council documents, strategies and plans as outlined below.

- [East Cambridgeshire District Council Housing Strategy](#)
- [East Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2027](#)
- [Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2025-2030](#)
- [Private Sector Housing Policy \(2022\)](#)
- Various Enforcement Policies across the Council

5.0 Strategic Aims and Objectives

5.1 Aims and objectives of the empty homes strategy

Irrespective of why a property has become and remained empty, and despite the owner's current circumstances, it is always the Council's primary intention to work *with* an empty home owner where possible, in order to support, and where required, facilitate action to reach the owner's ultimate intentions.

However, it is critical to remember that each property, owner, personal circumstances and reason for why the property became and has remained empty are all different, and therefore each property and owner have to be treated individually and based on the information that is available.

Whilst some reasons and circumstances can be more sensitive or challenging than others, it is important for the authority to be committed to the principles and aims of the Empty Homes Strategy, and recognise that an empty property can result in problematic situations for their neighbours and communities.

Owners must be made aware that whilst the council would prefer to work with them in bringing their plans to fruition, inaction is not an option. By owning an empty property, they have a responsibility for it and must act accordingly.

The Action Plan for progressing towards the overall aims is included at Appendix A, and acts as a prompt and a process guide to further develop the tools available, enhance the support and guidance East Cambridgeshire offers as an authority, and make further progress in bringing empty homes back into use across the district. The Action Plan identifies five key objectives for the Empty Homes Strategy, as follows:

5.2 Objective 1 | To build and maintain an accurate empty homes database

The continued development and maintenance of the empty homes database will play a pivotal role in the Council's efforts to tackle empty homes, and enable further steps to be taken to reduce numbers across the District. Holding key information and data, this database allows targeted action, allowing the relevant officer to conduct regular, often monthly data cleanse exercises, to ensure the information is accurate and up to date.

It should be noted that experience elsewhere has shown that an initial, in-depth review of this current information is likely to quickly reduce numbers of LTEs. Assuming this is the case for East Cambs., attention would then turn to the more complex cases.

Complaints and referrals received regarding empty homes will be logged accordingly to ensure that they are investigated and prioritised effectively, and 'risk rated' in conjunction with the scoring matrix found in Appendix C. Although the matrix score will be the principal guide to the order in which properties are dealt with, there may be exceptions based on local circumstances, severity and nature of a complaint, or immediate issues requiring urgent attention.

The largest source of information is received through a regular review of all council tax information. Strong and productive relationships and opportunities for data sharing will be developed with Council Tax colleagues at ARP, to ensure that up to date account information is obtainable, enabling an effective and efficient tool for both departments, and especially in terms of having accurate empty homes data included.

5.3 Objective 2 | To identify and prioritise empty homes for progressive action

A structured and intelligence-led approach will be taken to identify and prioritise empty homes across the district, ensuring that time resources are directed where they will have the greatest impact. Using the empty homes database as a central tool, properties will be assessed and categorised based on a range of risk factors, enabling a clear and consistent framework for intervention.

Particular focus will be given to long-term empty properties, especially those vacant for extended periods, where the likelihood of natural reoccupation (ie without council intervention) is low. In addition, properties with significant Council Tax arrears will be prioritised, recognising the dual benefit of bringing homes back into use, while supporting income recovery.

The Council will also prioritise the most challenging and problematic cases, including those subject to frequent complaints, reports of anti-social behaviour, or where properties are known to be causing nuisance or blight to the local area. Intelligence gathered from residents, elected members, and partner agencies will play a key role in identifying such properties and ensuring they are addressed appropriately. It is also important that we remain able to deal quickly with issues, regardless of them being empty homes or not.

While the scoring matrix outlined in Appendix C will guide prioritisation, a flexible approach will be maintained to respond to urgent or high-impact cases. This objective will ensure that enforcement and support activity is targeted effectively, driving measurable reductions in empty homes and improving neighbourhoods across East Cambridgeshire.

5.4 Objective 3 | Provide advice, assistance and guidance to empty home owners

As exposure of the empty homes issue continues to develop, so do the opportunities and methods to bring them back into use. As there are currently no national initiatives or schemes designed to support empty home owners, local authorities are afforded the opportunity to design and deliver initiatives that would help support the need of local people with local solutions.

Whilst East Cambridgeshire doesn't currently operate a financial mechanism of loans, grants or direct funding to support the return to use of empty property, such schemes will be explored and considered should the finances be made available, either locally or nationally, during the period of this strategy.

Other non-financial avenues of support will also be explored, considered and procured, but it is often the case that such innovation is dependent on the individual

needs and circumstances of the owner and therefore it is often found that these need to be procured or acquired as and when the need is identified.

Often acting as the first point of service, the Empty Homes page of the Council's website will be refreshed, updated and enhanced in order to provide an overview of the authority's activities, including the options, advice and support we are able to offer as an authority for those who own empty homes. Currently, the empty homes web page include offers of support, policy and protocol documents, as well as a tool for the public to report empty homes anonymously to the local authority.

5.5 Objective 4 | To reduce numbers, and return problematic empty homes back in to use

The process to bring empty homes back into use, and seeing the numbers of cases reduce, starts with the investigation and prioritisation of referrals, accurately recorded within the authority's database. All complaints and referrals from residents are treated as a priority, and then scored accordingly, using the rating matrix. In order to build trust in, and a positive reputation for the service, such complaints will be followed through, and complainants informed of the process as a whole as well as the priority status of their complaint subject.

After the initial information gathering exercise, regular and persistent engagement with empty home owners using existing resources and letters will allow every opportunity for empty home owners to respond and engage with the Council. Subsequently, council processes and procedures will enable such engagement to be recorded and monitored, with further action and or interventions planned where necessary.

As every empty home case is different in terms of its history and owner circumstances, the opportunity to further the tools and support offering the council have will be constantly reviewed, and where gaps in such support are identified, solutions will be sought in order to see these filled.

It is also the aim of the strategy to inform other wider council strategies and policies, and to encourage further support of the council's efforts to bring empty homes back into use where applicable.

The database will be used to regularly appraise the available enforcement options for all empty homes and pursue the relevant action when suitable for those deemed to be a priority, and more urgently where immediate attention and action is required as a result of a referral or complaint.

Where previously agreed actions have stalled, or when a lack of engagement with the authority leads to the decision to pursue action further, prior efforts to appraise suitable enforcement action will ensure a swift and reasonable process through to the service of notices.

Although used as a last resort, enforcement action should be a consideration throughout the investigation and support stages, in order to display that every effort and opportunity has been given to the owners prior to such action being taken. It is suggested that, whilst many more will be resolved quickly by other means 10

prioritised empty homes will be brought back into use annually throughout the period of this enforcement led strategy.

5.6 Objective 5 | To maximise income opportunities including Council Tax and enforcement debt recovery

Through empty homes work, and the developing working relationship with council tax colleagues, this strategy aims to identify and maximise debt recovery, both through council tax charges and arrears, and through land charges registered as a result of works in default being taken as part of the enforcement work which is likely..

Where enforcement action will be considered and carried out on a case-by-case basis, we will pursue all cases in conjunction with colleagues (both internally and also ARP), and where appropriate, drive forward action to consider Enforced Sales where necessary.

To this end , existing empty homes with large amounts of council tax arrears should be identified and added to the list of priority properties with immediate effect.

In addition, and as part of developing and maintaining an accurate database, we will expand work with ARP to ensure all cases of empty homes are up to date, and that the CTB1 submission is produced to reflect internal knowledge and datasets. This would ensure that any potential income opportunities provided by central government incentives are maximised.

Finally, to identify, track and pursue cases of empty homes where they have previously been removed from the council tax listing, resulting in no charges being applicable for the subject property. Having such cases brought back to use at the earliest opportunity, will therefore increase number of available and chargeable dwellings, as well as the potential revenue and for the authority.

5.7 Achieving our objectives

The Council believes that a corporate approach and commitment to dealing with LTEs will ensure all services within the council are working together to achieve the best for the district and its residents. The Council seeks to commit appropriate resources to work with owners of LTEs to bring properties back into use.

Through maintaining an accurate and up to date database of empty homes, their owners and relevant information, the council believes that this will work to provide a solid foundation of support, advice and guidance, serving to reduce the wider numbers of empty homes, and dealing with the more challenging cases.

The council aims to encourage empty homeowners to engage with the local authority, carrying out inspections, offering support and signposting to relevant internal or external partners, in order to provide the best route to occupation.

Where informal action has been unsuccessful then a range of enforcement action may be taken to facilitate re-occupation of the properties.

Where owners do not engage, or where the property has been identified as 'high risk' using the empty property risk assessment, the strategy will be adopted and the most appropriate enforcement action considered to bring the property back into use.

The council also seeks to raise awareness of successful action on empty homes across the district to encourage others to realise the benefits of bringing empty homes back into use, and support the longevity of the service.

6.0 Our Approach to Tackling Empty Homes

To meet our objectives in bringing empty homes back into use, it is recognised that there is a need to work both on a proactive and reactive basis. and that a coordinated approach across all relevant services is paramount in the success in bringing empty homes back into use. The council recognises that there is no single solution which will resolve problems associated with empty properties and will therefore use its powers and duties to engage; encourage and enforce against empty home owners on an individual and case by case basis.

6.1 Investigate, Engage, Encourage, Enforce

The process to be adopted, and that is considered to be best practice amongst empty homes practitioners, can be simplified into four stages; **Investigate, Engage, Encourage** and **Enforce**.

The process of bringing an empty home back into use begins with the **Investigation** stage. By exploring the details surrounding property ownership, recent occupancy history, property values and possible reasons behind the vacancy, officers are able to begin building a wider picture of the current circumstances in order to best decide on the possible future support and assistance required by the owner. This also enables initial contact with owners to be tailored based on evidence.

Secondly, the **Engage** stage uses template or bespoke letters to contact owners which have been developed to inform owners of the benefits of bringing their properties back into use, why the council is involved, and the potential options that they have moving forward.

These communications will escalate in seriousness from the first informal advice letter to a final warning actively presenting the possibility of enforcement action being undertaken to ensure the property is returned to use. These template letters are quick to print and send, allowing officers to deal with a potentially large volume of empty home owners, particularly useful as part of a data cleanse procedure.

In many cases these letters are successful, prompting a response from the property owner that leads onto the third stage in the process. If correspondence is unsuccessful, then visits will be carried out in an attempt to engage with property owners and provide bespoke support. Due to its nature, this work is detailed and can be time consuming, but its success often reduces the need for further enforcement action. If this approach fails to produce the desired outcome, it provides the groundwork and justification for legal action.

Having achieved initial contact with an owner, the next step is to understand their personal and property's circumstances and **encourage** them to share their future plans for the empty home. This then allows officers to intervene, if necessary, with suitable assistance and support tools at their disposal. This may be in the form of simply arranging for a property valuation, or enlisting a contractor to supply a schedule of works for refurbishment. However, this all depends on the circumstances and future plans of the owner.

Finally, where engagement is lacking, or previously agreed steps and actions have not been forthcoming, the officers will progress to the **enforce** stage. Opportunities will be explored to pursue formal action to remove problematic or dangerous features of a property or look to more stricter enforcement powers to have the property removed from the possession of its current owner.

Whilst such actions are always considered a last resort, they are considered throughout the process to build a thorough and comprehensive case file should the actions of the authority come under judicial scrutiny. In addition, some cases will require the council to act immediately, for instance, in respect of dangerous buildings, or statutory nuisance.

6.2 Advise, Support and Assist

In the first instance, it is always the council's aim to provide help and advice to the owners of empty homes. Advice may be given with refurbishment, sales, legal processes and other aspects of lettings, finding tenants, health and safety and energy efficiency. Where required, this may include support from internal or external partners, in order to ensure that the owner has all of the available options and information available to them prior to pursuing with a decision on their plans.

6.3 Council tax premiums on empty and second homes

East Cambridgeshire's current approach to empty and second homes premiums reflects a strengthened, policy-led response to housing need, aligned with recent legislative changes.

From April 2025, the Council applied a tiered long-term empty homes premium, beginning after just one year of vacancy rather than the previous two-year threshold. Charges escalate significantly over time, with a 100% premium (200% Council Tax) for properties empty 1–5 years, rising to 300% (400% Council Tax) for those vacant over 10 years. This accelerated framework is designed to incentivise earlier reoccupation and reduce the number of long-term empty homes.

In parallel, the Council has approved the introduction of a 100% Second Homes premium from April 2026, meaning owners of furnished but unoccupied properties will also pay double Council Tax. This aims to address the use of dwellings that do not contribute to permanent housing supply, while allowing for specific statutory exemptions such as job-related accommodation or properties actively marketed for sale or let.

6.4 Council Tax and Enforcement Debt Recovery

The Council will adopt a proactive and coordinated approach to council tax and enforcement debt recovery (including where necessary, from works in default) in relation to empty homes, recognising the important role this plays in both revenue collection and bringing properties back into use. Where empty properties accrue council tax arrears, these cases will be closely aligned with empty homes activity to ensure a joined-up and effective response.

Properties with significant arrears will be prioritised for intervention, as non-payment can often indicate wider issues such as long-term vacancy, neglect, or disengaged ownership. Close working arrangements between officers, council tax and recovery teams will ensure that up-to-date account information is shared, enabling timely and informed decision-making.

A range of recovery tools will be utilised in accordance with council policy and legislation, including reminder notices, summons, liability orders, and enforcement action through agents where appropriate. In more complex or high-risk cases, particularly those involving long-term empty homes, the Council will consider the use of additional enforcement mechanisms, such as charging orders or insolvency proceedings where these are proportionate and necessary.

This coordinated approach will ensure that debt recovery not only supports the council's financial position but also acts as a lever to encourage property owners to take action. By linking debt recovery activity with empty homes interventions, the council aims to increase engagement, promote reoccupation, and reduce the number of problematic empty properties across the district.

6.5 Value Added Tax (VAT)

The council is able to supply a 'reduced VAT' letter to empty home owners who are refurbishing their properties. Qualifying properties are those that have been empty for over two years, and enables an owner to reduce their VAT liability on certain aspects of a refurbishment from 20% to 5%, and for properties empty over 10 years, from 20% to 0% rated respectively.

The local authority is also able to assist in this by proving a property has been empty for a certain length of time, usually by exploring council tax records, or by using their prior knowledge or involvement with a property or owner. Further information on this can be found on the HMRC Buildings and Construction VAT (Notice 708), Section 8. ([Buildings and construction \(VAT Notice 708\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk))

6.6 Maximise income opportunities

The Council recognises that bringing empty homes back into use not only delivers housing benefits but also creates opportunities for income and revenue generation. Three key income streams have been identified which support both the sustainability of the service and wider corporate priorities.

Firstly, empty homes and second homes premiums provide a significant and growing source of revenue. These premiums are applied through the Council Tax system, increasing the financial liability on properties that are either long-term empty or not used as a sole or main residence. As well as generating income, these charges act as a behavioural incentive, encouraging owners to return properties to occupation. The

recent strengthening of premium thresholds is expected to further enhance both income levels and effectiveness.

Secondly, the reinstatement of properties previously removed from council tax banding, such as those classed as exempt or delisted, offers an additional revenue stream. By identifying when properties become habitable or no longer meet exemption criteria, the authority can ensure they are correctly banded and liable for Council Tax. This process improves data accuracy while increasing the overall tax base.

Finally, council tax and enforcement debt recovery represents a further income opportunity. Actively pursuing outstanding debts linked to empty homes ensures that owed revenue is recovered, while also prompting engagement from owners. Together, these three approaches form a complementary framework, supporting both financial resilience and the strategic aim of reducing empty homes across the district.

6.7 Enforcement

A voluntary way forward to renovation and re-occupation is the preferred option, and officers will endeavour to encourage and persuade such progress. However, where owners cannot be traced, where informal approaches fail, or a there is a detrimental effect on the community, the Council should proceed with legal action. Due regard will be given to the Council's wider enforcement policies before any action is taken.

The Council does have a substantial range of powers at its disposal and also duties required by legislation, and will consider using these where necessary. These include:

- Securing empty property – Notice to secure a property that is open to access. Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 s29
- Improving housing conditions – Improvement notices, Prohibition Order or a Hazard Awareness Notice to remove hazards. (Housing Act 2004)
- Eradication of vermin – Notice to clear any land of vermin and remove waste, deposits or accumulations likely to attract vermin. The Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 allows the Council to require and undertake works on behalf of an owner or occupier to prevent damage to buildings being caused by rats and mice (can include works to property or gardens)
- Abatement of a nuisance – Notice to reduce or remove a statutory nuisance such as an accumulation or deposit that is prejudicial to health or a nuisance under Environmental Protection Act s79/s80.
- The Public Health Act 1936 allows the Local Authority to require and undertake works on behalf of an owner or occupier to improve filthy and verminous properties
- Safety of empty homes – Notice to make a property safe or allow emergency action to be taken to make it safe. Building Act 1984 section 77 & 78 / Housing Act 2004.

- Notice to make satisfactory provision for drainage where it is not currently in place, including sewers, drains and rainwater pipes in disrepair or missing altogether. Building Act 1985.
- Unsightly condition of empty home and adjoining land – notice to address unsightly land or external appearance of a property under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 s215.
- Community Protection Warning and Notice. where the property is causing persistent detriment to the local area.
- Council Tax debts to the property. Where council tax debts are excessive, ARP will secure the debts which allows the start of the formal proceedings of applying for a liability order/charging order and enforced sale.

6.8 Enforcement Policies

All enforcement activity for empty properties will have regard to the relevant legislation, as well as the Council's various enforcement policies as appropriate, most likely within the following departments:

- Environmental Health
- Planning
- Building Control
- Council Tax (through ARP)

6.9 Enforced Sale

The Law of Property Act 1925 allows local authorities to recover charges and debts through the sale of the property. This option can only be utilised where there is a debt to the local authority that can be registered as a statutory charge on the property.

6.10 Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO)

Available under section 133 of the Housing Act 2004, an EDMO can be made where an owner leaves a property empty and has no intention of securing its voluntary reoccupation. The Council and a partner agency undertake the management of a property for a period of up to seven years, with the EDMO reviewed after that time.

EDMO's are open to appeal at any stage and are seen as administratively burdensome. The end result is the possible return of the property into the same ownership as that which left it vacant and neglected in the first instance.

6.11 Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)

Nationally, Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO's) on empty homes have increasingly been successful, with the outcomes having proven popular with the general public. In addition to enhancing housing availability, the anti-social and criminal activities with which empty buildings can so often attract are also addressed as a consequence of such enforcement.

CPO's can be made under S17 of the Housing Act 1985 or under S226 (as amended by Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, for the provision of housing accommodation or to make a quantitative or qualitative improvement to existing housing.

6.12 Additional Statutory Powers

Where an empty home is causing a specific problem to a neighbourhood or is dangerous or ruinous for example, a range of enforcement powers are available. The timing and extent of the action taken will be dependent upon the individual circumstances encountered at the property. A detailed list of these measures is listed in Appendix D.

6.13 Unclaimed CPO / Enforced Sale Money

In the event that a property has been sold using the enforced sale process the following items can be deducted from the sale proceeds:

- any works in default costs
- the legal costs in undertaking the enforced sale procedure
- conveyancing costs in connection with the sale
- auctioneer's or other marketing costs
- other officer time in relation to the enforced sale process
- any other debts owed to the council

The balance would then be paid to the former owner of the property subject to any other charges or mortgages on the property or paid into Court.

Where the Compulsory Purchase Order process is used, the former owners will be entitled to compensation once the council becomes the owner of the property. If a claim is not settled, or a reference made to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) within six years, the claim for compensation will be statute barred.

6.14 Promoting the empty homes strategy

The empty homes strategy will be publicised locally and on the Council's website to raise awareness.

The residents, councillors, partner agencies and other council services are encouraged to report empty homes in their community.

An email address will be provided on the council's empty homes webpage in order for the aforementioned to make contact, and report an empty home.

The council will encourage property owners to make their unused home occupied through writing to them about the strategy and enforcement policy.

7.0 Appendices

Appendix A – 24-Month Empty Homes Action Plan

Appendix B – Strategy Delivery Phases and timescales

Appendix C – Empty Homes Priority Scoring System

Appendix D – Statutory Enforcement Powers

Appendix E – Empty Homes & Second Homes Premiums

Appendix F – Council Tax Exemptions

Appendix G – Empty Homes Procedure / Flowchart

Appendix A: 24-Month Empty Homes Action Plan

Objective 1 - To build and maintain an accurate empty homes database		
Reference	Action	Success Criteria & Outcomes
OB1	Undertake monthly data matching and cleansing using Council Tax and internal systems to ensure all records reflect current property status and ownership	Database reviewed monthly, with discrepancies identified and resolved, achieving and maintaining data accuracy
OB2	Record and track all complaints, referrals and inspection outcomes within a centralised system to support consistent case management	100% of cases logged within 5 working days, with clear audit trails and regular updates recorded
OB3	Strengthen data sharing arrangements with internal teams and relevant external partners to improve intelligence and case identification	Formal data-sharing protocols in place, reviewed annually, with evidence of regular information exchange
Objective 2 - To identify and prioritise empty homes for progressive action		
OB4	Apply a structured, risk-based scoring matrix to all priority empty homes cases to ensure a consistent and transparent process	100% of active priority cases scored, with priority levels clearly recorded and regularly reviewed
OB5	Undertake quarterly reviews of high-risk categories, including long-term empty homes, high Council Tax arrears, and frequently complained-about properties	Updated priority lists produced quarterly, with changes in risk status clearly documented
OB6	Maintain and actively manage a targeted list of high-priority properties requiring intervention	All priority cases show evidence of ongoing action, engagement or escalation where appropriate

Objective 3 - Provide advice, assistance and guidance to empty home owners		
OB7	Develop, publish and regularly update guidance materials to inform owners of their responsibilities, options and available support	Guidance is accessible online, reviewed annually, and reflects current legislation and local policy
OB8	Proactively engage with owners through written correspondence, telephone contact and site visits to encourage action	Initial contact made within 10 working days of case allocation, with follow-up activity recorded
OB9	Signpost owners to relevant financial assistance, legal advice, and property improvement services where appropriate	Evidence of advice and support options provided in at least 90% of applicable cases
Objective 4 – To reduce numbers, and return problematic empty homes back into use		
OB10	Work collaboratively with owners to secure voluntary solutions, including sale, letting, or refurbishment of empty properties	Demonstrable year-on-year reduction in long-term empty homes across the district
OB11	Escalate cases to formal enforcement action where voluntary engagement fails, in line with Council policy and legislation	Enforcement action initiated in qualifying high-risk cases, with clear progression recorded
OB12	Collaborate with internal departments and external partners to address complex or high-impact empty homes	Reduction in complaints and environmental issues linked to targeted properties
Objective 5 - To maximise income opportunities, including council tax and enforcement debt recovery		
OB13	Ensure empty homes and second homes premiums are applied consistently and accurately to all eligible properties	100% of qualifying properties correctly identified and charged, with minimal error rates

OB14	Identify and reinstate properties previously exempt or removed from the Council Tax list once they become liable	Year-on-year increase in properties returned to the tax base, supported by audit records
OB15	Actively pursue council tax and enforcement debt linked to empty homes through coordinated recovery processes	Measurable reduction in arrears levels and improved recovery rates year-on-year

Appendix B – 24-Month Action Plan Delivery, Phased Breakdown

Workstream	Objectives Achieved	
Phase 1 – Establishing the baseline		
June 2026 – September 2026	Develop and populate a comprehensive empty homes database using Council Tax data, historic records, and referrals, ensuring all known cases are captured	Objectives 1 and 2
	Categorise and risk-rate all priority properties using the agreed scoring matrix to identify high, medium, and low priority cases	
	Undertake site visits to all high-priority properties to verify status, gather intelligence, and record condition and occupancy evidence	
Phase 2 – Case Building		
September 2026 – December 2026	Identify properties with significant Council Tax arrears and begin detailed casework in collaboration with ARP Revenues and Recovery teams	Objectives 1, 2 and 5
	Review properties currently subject to exemptions or discounts to confirm eligibility and identify opportunities for reinstatement	
	Initiate early actions to maximise revenue, including correcting liability, applying premiums, and preparing cases for recovery	
Phase 3 – Owner engagement and support		

December 2026 – May 2027	Implement a structured three-stage letter process to engage all owners of empty homes, encouraging dialogue and action	Objectives 3, 4, 5
	Develop and promote a clear package of advice, guidance, and support options, including financial assistance and partnership opportunities	
	Establish links with internal departments and external partners (e.g. housing, enforcement, agents) to support owners in bringing properties back into use	
Phase 4 – Intervention and escalation		
May 2027 – December 2027	Review progress across all cases, updating risk ratings and prioritisation based on engagement and outcomes achieved	Objectives 1, 2 and 4
	Progress high-priority and non-compliant cases toward appropriate enforcement action, in line with policy and legislation	
	Continue proactive engagement with newly identified empty homes while maintaining database accuracy and regular updates	
Phase 5 – Enforcement and delivery		
December 2027 – June 2028	Finalise and implement enforcement action plans for the most challenging and long-term empty homes	Objectives 2, 4 and 5
	Progress formal enforcement measures where necessary, including legal and financial remedies to secure reoccupation	
	Monitor outcomes, including reductions in empty homes and recovery of debt, and embed learning into ongoing service delivery	

Appendix C: Empty Homes Scoring and Rating Matrix

Each empty home identified as a high priority case, will be assessed using a scoring sheet which considers various criteria. The result of this assessment will determine the level of action, attention given, and possible future enforcement action taken.

Properties will be reassessed when necessary, or new information is obtained to ensure they remain situated in the correct categories. The categories will be classified as follows:

RED – (scores 50 or over)

Cases which fall into this category will be prioritised. All avenues will be explored with the owner to return their property to use in a way that suits their own needs, the needs of the community and the Council. Where assistance is refused and the owner is unwilling to cooperate, all enforcement options will be considered to establish the most appropriate course of action.

AMBER - (scores 25 - 49)

Cases which fall into this category will be considered a lower priority than those in the Red category. Resources will still be invested in these cases and officers will work with owners in an attempt to prevent empty homes from deteriorating and being reassessed to a higher category. Where necessary, enforcement options will be employed if considered the most appropriate course of action. Cases in this category will be monitored on a more frequent basis than those properties which fall within the Green category and will be reassessed where necessary.

GREEN - (scores less than 25)

Cases which fall into this category will be given a lower priority for action, but owners will be contacted and offered any assistance they may need to return their property back into use. These properties will be monitored for any change and reassessed where necessary.



Empty Homes Assessment Scoring Matrix

Criteria	Classification	Score
Length of Time Empty	< 1 year	0
	1-2 years	5
	2-5 years	10
	5-10 years	15
	> 10 years	20
Location	Extremely isolated with no access	0
	Isolated property with access	5
	Rural residential area	10
	Urban residential neighbourhood	15
	Prominent position	20
Special Interest	Listed Building	10
	Located in a Conservation Area	5
General Condition	Well maintained	0
	Acceptable for surrounding area	5
	Noticeably empty/unattractive	10
	Extremely unsightly/detrimental to the area	20
Unwanted attention	Attracting criminal activity such as graffiti, fly tipping, vandalism, anti-social behaviour	20
Monies Owed to East Cambridgeshire District Council	No outstanding monies owed	0
	< £500	5
	£500 - £2000	10
	£2000 - £5000	15
	> £5000	20
Owner Interaction	High level of cooperation	0
		5

	Average level of contact & efforts made	10
	Minimal contact & little efforts made	20
	No contact/untraceable/no efforts made	
Total Score	Red / Amber / Green	

Appendix D: Statutory Enforcement Options

Town & Country Planning Act 1990, Section 215: Where the condition of an empty home is detrimental to the amenity of the area.

Building Act 1984, Sections 77-79: Where an empty home is in such a condition to be dangerous or is seriously detrimental to the amenity or of the neighbourhood.

Building Act 1984, Section 59: Where the condition of the drainage to a building is prejudicial to health or a nuisance.

Environmental Protection Act 1990, Section 80: Where a statutory nuisance exists, is likely to occur or recur at the property.

Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949, Section 4: Applied where the condition of the property is such that it is providing or likely to provide harbourage to rodents.

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, Section 29: Allows the Council to act if a property is open to unauthorised access and is a risk to public health.

Housing and Planning Act 2016, Part 7: Allows authorisation to be given for officers to enter land (and property on that land) in connection with a proposal to acquire a compulsory interest in that land (and property on that land).

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, Section 16; and Town & Country Planning Act 1990, section 330 – A notice may be served to establish information regarding property ownership or interests in land.

Housing Act 1985 Section 17 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981: Forms the basis for the compulsory purchase of land/buildings for the provision of housing accommodation.

Housing Act 2004 Part 4: Grants powers to take over the management of a property using Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO).

Law of Property Act 1925, Part III: The basis for enforced sale where certain debts are owed to the Local Authority.

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, Part 4: Allows for enforcement of matters considered to be detrimental to the quality of life to those in the locality.

Public Health Act 1961 Section 34: Deals with the removal of waste from property or land.

Public Health Act 1936 Section 83: Deals with the cleansing of filthy or verminous premises.

Housing Act 2004 Part 1: Housing conditions, improvements and enforcement.

Appendix E: Current Levels of Empty and Second Home Premiums

Empty Homes Premium

- **Implementation timeline:**
Approved February 2024, effective 1st April 2024, revised thresholds from 1st April 2025
- **Trigger for premium:**
Applies when a property is empty and substantially unfurnished for 12 months
- **Premium levels (from April 2025):**
 - 1–5 years empty: +100% (200% Council Tax total)
 - 5–10 years empty: +200% (300% total)
 - 10+ years empty: +300% (400% total)
- **Key national exemptions:**
 - Armed forces accommodation (Class E)
 - Annexes (Class F)
 - Actively marketed for sale/let (12 months)
 - Probate cases (12 months)
 - Major repairs/structural works (12 months)
- **Local discretionary exceptions:**
 - Sale/marketing extended up to 24 months
 - New owners (sale or inheritance): up to 12–24 months relief
- **Additional notes:**
 - Uninhabitable discounts cannot overlap once premium applies

Second Homes Premium

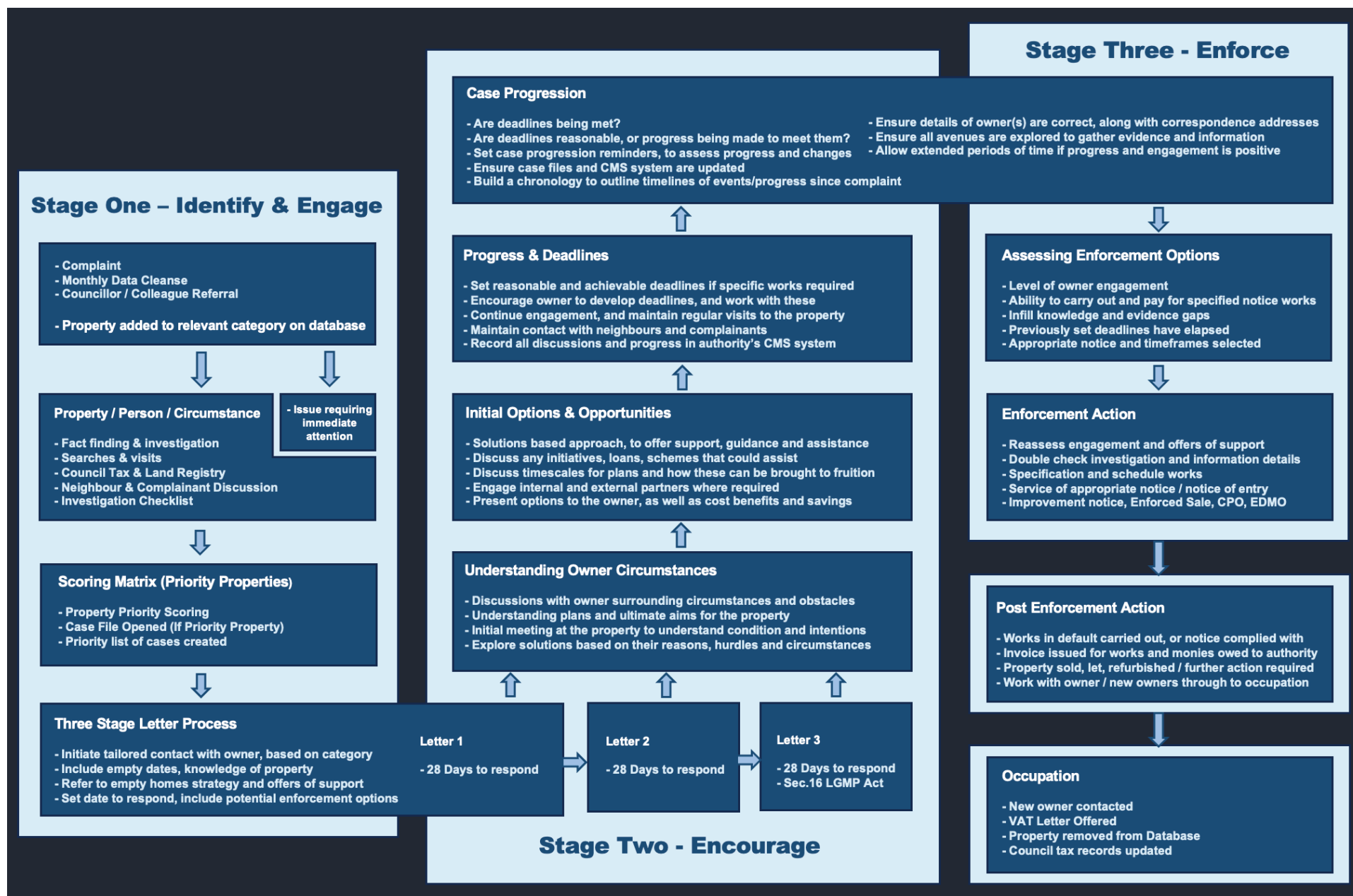
- **Implementation timeline:**
Approved February 2025, came into force 1st April 2026
- **Definition of second home:**
Furnished property with no sole or main resident
- **Premium level:**
100% premium (200% Council Tax payable) after 1 year
- **Key national exemption classes:**
 - Armed forces accommodation (Class E)
 - Annexes (Class F)
 - Properties actively marketed for let (12 months)
 - Probate-related properties (12 months)
 - Job-related dwellings
 - Caravan pitches/boat moorings

Seasonal/holiday-use restricted properties

- **Local discretionary provisions:**
Properties marketed for sale: exemption extended up to 24 months
Discretion available in cases of hardship or vulnerability
- **Additional notes:**
Formal notice included in Council Tax setting process
Aligns second homes treatment with empty homes premium approach

Appendix F: Council Tax | Unoccupied Exemptions

Class B	Property left empty and owned by a charity
Class D	Empty and liable person in prison or detained
Class E	Empty, where the owner is receiving care in a home or hospital
Class F	Empty, where the owner is deceased
Class G	Occupation of the property is prohibited by law
Class H	Property left empty by a minister of religion
Class I	Property owner has moved to receive personal care
Class J	Property owner has moved to provide personal care
Class K	Property empty, last occupied by a student
Class L	Properties that have been repossessed
Class Q	Property owned by someone who has become bankrupt
Class R	Vacant caravan pitch or boat mooring
Class T	Unoccupied Annexes



Title: Annual Reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies

Committee: Operational Services Committee

Date: 22 June 2026

Author: Senior Democratic Services Officer

Report number: AB22

Contact officer: Patrick Adams

Senior Democratic Services Officer

Patrick.Adams@eastcambs.gov.uk, 01353 616298, Room 214, The Grange, Ely

Issue

1. To receive the annual reports from Council representatives on Outside Bodies within the responsibility of the Operational Services Committee.

Recommendations

2. That the annual reports from Council representatives on Outside Bodies within the responsibility of the Operational Services Committee be noted (Appendix 2).

Background/Options

3. The Council’s Constitution specifies in the Terms of Reference for the Operational Services Committee that it should appoint representatives to Outside Bodies within its remit, from the wider membership of Council, for a period of up to 4 years. The most recent appointments were made at the Operational Services Committee meeting held on 23 June 2025.
4. The list of Outside Bodies currently within the remit of the Operational Services Committee is attached as Appendix 1, which includes the names of the appointed representatives.
5. Attached as Appendix 2 are the relevant pages of the Outside Bodies Booklet which detail the aims and activities of the Outside Bodies within the remit of the Operational Services Committee, and the annual reports from the Council representatives.

Arguments/Conclusions

6. Members are asked to note the reports received from the 2024-26 representatives.

Additional Implications Assessment

Financial No	Legal No	Human Resources (HR) No
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) No	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) No	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) No

Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary of the Outside Bodies and representatives for 2024-25 under the remit of the Operational Services Committee.

Appendix 2: The relevant pages of the Outside Bodies Booklet which detail the aims and activities of the Outside Bodies within the remit of the Operational Services Committee, and the annual reports of the Council representatives

Background documents

[Representation on outside bodies | East Cambridgeshire District Council](#)

**OPERATIONAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
OUTSIDE BODIES REPRESENTATIVES 2025-26**

ORGANISATION	REQUIRED REPRESENTATIVES	APPOINTMENT(S)	ECDC CONTACT OFFICER
Cambridgeshire County Council Adults and Health Committee	1 Lead Member and 1 Substitute	Cllr Keith Horgan (<i>as Lead Member</i>) Cllr Julia Huffer (<i>as Substitute</i>)	Environmental Services Manager: Nick Baker
Cambridgeshire Police & Crime Panel	1 Lead Member and 1 Substitute	Cllr Christine Whelan (<i>as Lead Member</i>) Cllr Ross Trent (<i>as Substitute</i>)	Communities & Partnerships Manager: Lewis Bage
Citizens Advice West Suffolk	1 Lead Member and 1 Substitute	Cllr Alan Sharp (<i>as Lead Member</i>) Cllr Julia Huffer (<i>as Substitute</i>)	Communities & Partnerships Manager: Lewis Bage
Community Safety Partnership	1 Lead Member, 1 Member, and 2 Substitutes	Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith (<i>as Lead Member</i>) Cllr Martin Goodearl (<i>as Member</i>) Cllr Keith Horgan (<i>as Substitute</i>) Cllr Alan Sharp (<i>as Substitute</i>)	Neighbourhood & Community Safety Team Leader: Emma Graves
Historic England – Heritage Champion	1	Cllr Lucius Vellacott	Conservation Officer: Christopher Partrick
Paradise Centre Management Committee, Ely	1	Cllr Martin Goodearl	Leisure & Active Lifestyles Manager: Martin Grey
RECAP Board	1	Cllr Julia Huffer	Environmental Services Manager: Nick Baker

Appendix 1

Sanctuary Housing Services Ltd – East Cambridgeshire Management Committee	2	Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith Cllr Alan Sharp	Housing & Community Advice Manager: Angela Parmenter
Soham and District Sports Association	2	Cllr Ian Bovingdon Cllr Lucius Vellacott	Leisure & Active Lifestyles Manager: Martin Grey

EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES WITHIN THE REMIT OF THE OPERATIONAL SERVICES COMMITTEE 2025-26

(Including reports from representatives for 2025-26)

Contents

Organisations (including 2025-26 reports)

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Cambridgeshire County Council Adults and Health Committee	2
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Community Safety Partnership.....	5
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Paradise Centre Management Committee – Ely.....	8
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PRIORITY CATEGORY OF OFFICER SUPPORT

- 1.** Nominated officers to provide Members with regular support on a proactive basis and attend meetings where appropriate (including those outside bodies where officers attend at present).
- 2.** Nominated officers to provide ad hoc support on specific agenda issues and act as a contact for feedback and implementation of action points. The onus will be on the Member to contact the nominated officer to facilitate these arrangements.
- 3.** Members should liaise directly with Democratic Services (Committees).

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ADULTS AND HEALTH
COMMITTEE**

AIMS AND ACTIVITIES

- The County Council’s public health duty including health improvement, individual and community wellbeing, and reduction of health inequalities.
- To respond as appropriate to central government consultation relating to policy or legislation falling within the remit of the Committee.
- The review and scrutiny of any matter relating to the planning, provision, and operation of the health services in Cambridgeshire.
- To report to the Secretary of State for Health on any proposals for substantial change to any part of the NHS’s services within Cambridgeshire.

Representation:	One Member and one Substitute
Status of Member:	Non-voting member
Approx. no. of meetings per year:	6
Expenses paid by organisation:	No
Insurance provision:	Yes
Category of Officer Support (see p. 6):	1
Contact Officer:	Waste & Environmental Services Manager, Nick Baker

Representatives for 2025/26: **Cllr Keith Horgan (*Lead Member*)**
Cllr Julia Huffer (*Substitute*)

REPORTS FROM 2025/26 REPRESENTATIVES

Cllr Keith Horgan (Attended all five meetings and online meetings)

- (i) One element in the ECDC Corporate Plan is to “Support our residents to live happy and healthy lives”. Scrutinising the activities of health service provision is key to us achieving our commitments.
- (ii) Continued representation is vital to our mission as is the primary way of focusing on the quality of services delivered for physical and mental health. The committee work programme is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure it is relevant to resident’s needs.
- (iii) The committee have discussed items such as the performance of the East of England Ambulance Service, the provision of mental health support from the Cambridge & Peterborough Foundation Trust, the Integrated Care Board proposals for cost reduction and reconfiguration, provision of NHS dental services, the Delivery of the NHS 10 Year Plan in Cambridgeshire and others is a wide ranging work programme.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE POLICE & CRIME PANEL

AIMS AND ACTIVITIES

The Police and Crime Panel (PCP) provides checks and balances on the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The Panel does not scrutinise Cambridgeshire Constabulary; it scrutinises how the PCC carries out their statutory responsibilities. While the Panel is there to constructively challenge the PCC, it also has a key role in supporting the Commissioner in their role in enhancing public accountability of the police force.

- To review and make a report or recommendation on the draft police and crime plan, or draft variation, given to the panel by the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- To review, put questions to the Police and Crime Commissioner at a public meeting, and make a report or recommendation (as necessary) on the annual report.
- To hold a confirmation hearing and review, make a report, and recommendation (as necessary) in respect of proposed senior appointments made by the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- To review and make a report on the proposed appointment of the Chief Constable.
- To review and make a report and recommendation (as necessary) on the proposed precept.
- To review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, by the Police and Crime Commissioner in connection with the discharge of the commissioner’s functions.
- To make reports or recommendations to the Police and Crime Commissioner with respect to the discharge of the commissioner’s functions.
- To support the effective exercise of the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- To fulfil functions in relation to complaints about conduct matters, in accordance with the responsibilities accorded to the panel by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.
- To appoint an Acting Police and Crime Commissioner if necessary.
- To suspend the Police and Crime Commissioner if it appears to the panel that the Commissioner has been charged in the United Kingdom or Isle of Man with an offence which carries a maximum term of imprisonment exceeding two years.

Representation:	One member and one substitute
Status of Member:	E CDC representative
No. meetings per year:	4
Expenses paid by organisation:	£920 per annum (maximum) from a central fund administered by Peterborough City Council
Insurance provision:	No
Category of Officer Support (see p. 6):	1
Contact Officer:	Communities and Partnerships Manager, Lewis Bage

Representatives for 2025/26: **Cllr Christine Whelan (Lead Member)**
Cllr Ross Trent (Substitute)

REPORTS FROM 2025/26 REPRESENTATIVES

Cllr Christine Whelan (attended 5 of 6 meetings)

Summary of key issues

The July 2025 meeting considered the Commissioner’s Annual Report 2024/25 and the wider Police and Crime Plan priorities. Reported progress included improved 999 and 101

call handling, additional visible patrols in hotspot areas, support for Community Safety Partnerships, serious violence prevention work and £2.4m invested in victim and witness support services. The Annual Report also stated that recorded crime had fallen by 2% compared with 2023/24, although some categories had increased, including anti-social behaviour, theft from the person, possession of weapons and shoplifting.

At the September 2025 meeting, the Panel focused on Early Intervention and Prevention and a Delivery Plan update. The minutes record discussion of knife crime, firearms licensing backlogs, serious violence prevention, community safety partnerships, youth work, offender rehabilitation and the need for stronger engagement with local Community Safety Partnership meetings. The Panel noted that £600,000 of Serious Violence Funding had been allocated to specific departments to assist prevention work.

The November 2025 papers focused heavily on support for victims and witnesses, commissioning and budget pressures. The PCC reported that more than 6,000 victims had received support between April and September 2025, with over 1,300 people reporting improved health and wellbeing and over 1,500 reporting increased feelings of safety. The same papers recorded 378 referrals to the ISVA service and 296 referrals for emotional support through the countywide sexual violence support service in the first six months of 2025/26.

The commissioning report is particularly relevant to district councils because it identifies partnership working with local authorities, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership teams and Community Safety Partnerships. The OPCC reported oversight of a £6.7m commissioning and grants budget, managing 54 funding awards across 41 providers in 2025/26.

The January 2026 meeting considered the 2026/27 precept and medium-term financial position. The minutes record significant financial pressure: total funding of approximately £220.5m if the precept rise was agreed, an initial £18m cost pressure, and £6.5m savings needed to balance the budget. Members also raised firearms licensing, Ely Police Station, population growth, the lack of physical police presence north of Milton, digital exclusion, and the continued case for fairer funding for Cambridgeshire.

The March 2026 papers completed the cycle of Police and Crime Plan monitoring, including Safe Communities and Tackling Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour. The papers reported that Cambridgeshire ranked highly for trust and confidence, remained the fourth lowest funded force, and received £247 per head compared with a national average of £278. The Panel was asked to support delivery by encouraging crime reporting, linking with CSPs, supporting anti-social behaviour work through council portfolios and sharing OPCC communications and surveys.

Implications for East Cambridgeshire

For East Cambridgeshire, the most relevant themes are neighbourhood policing visibility, rural crime, anti-social behaviour, victim support, domestic abuse, serious violence prevention, firearms licensing, digital exclusion and the physical accessibility of policing services. The Panel papers show clear reliance on local partnership structures, particularly Community Safety Partnerships. ECDC should therefore continue to use its CSP role to press for visible local policing, timely intelligence sharing, accessible victim pathways and clear escalation routes for district-specific concerns.

Recommended action

East Cambridgeshire District Council is asked to continue engaging through the Community Safety Partnership, local Police and Crime Panel representatives and the OPCC to ensure East Cambridgeshire priorities are reflected in future delivery plans, commissioning decisions and budget representations.

Cllr Ross Trent (substitute)
(Not required.)

CITIZENS ADVICE WEST SUFFOLK

AIMS AND ACTIVITIES

The objective of the service is to provide free, confidential, impartial, and independent advice to enable local residents to deal with a wide range of issues, including benefits, housing, money advice, employment, consumer, relationships, taxation and many more. The nature of the assistance provided will depend on a client's needs and abilities.

The provision of this service requires that, at any one time, 2 to 6 advisers and 1 supervisor are on duty and 1 telephone number with 3 linked lines are available to members of the public. For face-to-face advice, offices are available at Foley House, Wellington Street, Newmarket.

The standard of service is set out in the Citizens Advice Quality Assurance Standards Membership Agreement.

Responsibility for the management of the Advice Service is vested in the Citizens Advice Trustee Board, the membership and operation of which is laid down by a constitution/Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Representation:	One Member and one Substitute
Status of Member:	ECDC representative (no decision-making powers)
No. meetings per year:	12
Expenses paid by organisation:	No
Insurance provision:	Yes
Category of Officer Support (see p. 6):	2
Contact Officer:	Communities & Partnerships Manager, Lewis Bage

Representatives for 2025/26:	Cllr Alan Sharp (<i>Lead Member</i>) Cllr Julia Huffer (<i>Substitute</i>)
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REPORTS FROM 2025/26 REPRESENTATIVES

Cllr Alan Sharp – Attended 3 out of 7 meetings

The CAB meetings offer the ability to attend online, so this increases the ability to attend.

ECDC gives an annual grant to West Suffolk CAB, so it is important that we take an active part in the workings of the bureau.

The CAB performs an important function for the residents of East Cambridgeshire, especially in the southern part of the district.

A continued presence is required on this body.

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

AIMS AND ACTIVITIES

- Section 6 of the 1998 Act requires the responsible authorities [commonly referred to collectively as a Community Safety Partnership (CSP)] in a local government area to work together in formulating and implementing strategies to tackle local crime and disorder in the area.
- To work in partnership with other organisations and groups to implement the Strategies.
- To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies.
- To contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of local people by improving Community Safety and reducing crime and disorder (and the fear of crime) in East Cambridgeshire.

Representation:	Two Members and two Substitutes
Status of Member:	ECDC representative. Lead Member has voting rights.
No. meetings per year:	4
Expenses paid by organisation:	No
Insurance provision:	No
Category of Officer Support (see p. 6):	1
Contact Officer:	Neighbourhood & Community Safety Team Leader, Emma Graves
Representatives for 2025/26:	Cllr Christine Ambrose-Smith(Lead Member) Cllr Martin Goodearl Cllr Keith Horgan (Substitute) Cllr Alan Sharp (Substitute)

REPORTS FROM 2025/26 REPRESENTATIVES

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith (not received)

Cllr James Lay (not received)

Cllr Keith Horgan (substitute)
(Not required.)

Cllr Alan Sharp (Substitute)
(Not required.)

HISTORIC ENGLAND – HERITAGE CHAMPION

AIMS AND ACTIVITIES

The historic environment includes historic buildings, landscapes, monuments, places, archaeology (including marine archaeology) and areas. The Heritage Champion will promote the local historic environment, share best practice and attend training (where appropriate).

The network of Heritage Champions across the country supports the protection of the historic environment at a local level. At a strategic level, Champions can make sure that local plans and strategies capture the contribution that the local historic environment can make to the success of an area. More specifically they can:

- Help local authorities manage the historic environment of their area;
- Promote heritage within the local community, generating enthusiasm for and awareness of the importance of the local historic environment;
- Help ensure that commitment to the proper care of the historic environment is embedded in all relevant activities and plans of the local authority;
- Support the Authority’s local historic environment services (both archaeological and historic buildings conservation officers);
- Influence and communicate with others to ensure benefits for the historic environment.

Representation:	One Member
Status of Member:	Champion
No. meetings per year:	0
Expenses paid by organisation:	No
Insurance provision:	No
Category of Officer Support (see p. 6):	1
Contact Officer:	Conservation Officer, Christopher Partrick
Representative for 2025/26:	Cllr Lucius Vellacott

REPORT FROM 2025/26 REPRESENTATIVE

Cllr Lucius Vellacott

The Heritage Champion role is key to the Corporate Objective of sustainable communities, as it is a platform for considering heritage matters in the planning process.

Continued representation is worthwhile due to the benefits of provided elected member oversight on functions which protect our rich heritage in East Cambridgeshire. However, more frequent formal engagement (meetings, email updates etc.) with the relevant officers would be necessary to bring the role up to the standard that it could achieve. At present, the Heritage Champion is not as included in the Council’s extensive heritage work as they could be.

My personal highlight of the last year, and the most relevant activity from the role, was the granting of Grade II Listed status to Fen Cottage at Wicken Fen. More broadly, I have championed heritage issues in the planning process and considered them through my other functions as a councillor when scrutinising our service provision.

PARADISE CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

AIMS AND ACTIVITIES

- The provision of facilities for playing sports;
- The provision of opportunities for recreation, social activities and refreshment, for the benefit of its members and the public;
- The provision and maintenance of a sports and leisure centre at Paradise Ground, Ely; including selection of the centre management.

Representation:	One Member
Status of Member:	Non-voting Observer
No. meetings per year:	6
Expenses paid by organisation:	No
Insurance provision:	Yes
Category of Officer Support (see p. 6):	3
Contact Officer:	Leisure & Active Lifestyles Manager, (vacancy)

Representative for 2025/26: Cllr Martin Goodearl

REPORTS FROM 2025/26 REPRESENTATIVE

Cllr Martin Goodearl – not received

RECAP BOARD

AIMS AND ACTIVITIES

RECAP has representation from all Districts, Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council. The partnership was set up to enable discussion and joint decisions. By working collaboratively on both the collection and disposal of waste as well as associated areas of work, education, fly-tipping efficiencies have been realised.

The RECAP Board shall:

- act as the focus for discussion and to deliver a political perspective and steer to the scope of activities undertaken by the RECAP Partnership.
- establish and implement a process of partnership and joint working on issues included within the scope of activities, seeking consensus within the budgets delegated by the constituent Councils, whilst respecting the individual council policies and authorisations of individual members.
- investigate ways of working to deliver services provided by Partner authorities in a more economic and efficient way, including the investigation of joint procurement where applicable.
- promote data sharing of the local environmental services provided by the Partner authorities and others in order to identify best practice.
- agree and recommend to the appointing authorities, the breakdown of the financial contribution to be made by respective Councils towards the coordination and development of the work of the RECAP Partnership.
- agree an annual work programme and recognise the achievements of the RECAP Partnership by regularly reporting on progress to the Cabinets of the County Council and Peterborough City Council and to the appropriate District Council Executives.
- promote common messages and common themes to ensure a consistent approach between the Partner authorities.
- contribute to the process of public consultation and public debate in relation to the services included in the scope of activities.
- consider the impact of legislation and national policy development and to make recommendations on the implications for, and response of, Partner authorities.

Representation:	One Member
Status of Member:	ECDC representative. Decision-maker.
No. meetings per year:	4
Expenses paid by organisation:	No
Insurance provision:	No
Category of Officer Support (see p. 6):	1
Contact Officer:	Environmental Services Manager, Liz Knox
Representative for 2025/26:	Cllr Julia Huffer

REPORT FROM 2025/26 REPRESENTATIVE

Cllr Julia Huffer (not received)

SANCTUARY HOUSING SERVICES LTD
EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

AIMS AND ACTIVITIES

Sanctuary Housing Services Ltd is a non-profit-making organisation providing affordable homes for rent throughout East Cambridgeshire.

The purpose of the East Cambridgeshire Committee (the Committee) is to:

- Monitor and challenge landlord services provided to Sanctuary Group tenants living within the East Cambridgeshire District Council area
- Ensure services comply with the consumer standards set by Regulator for Social Housing
- Oversee compliance with the Local Offer to Sanctuary residents within the East Cambridgeshire District Council area
- Monitor the delivery of community investment activity in the East Cambridgeshire District Council area
- Ensure services are effective, improve and continue to offer good value
- Pay due consideration to the objectives of East Cambridgeshire District Council and other key local partners
- Work with, and support, Sanctuary's operations nationally
- Recommend improvements to the way local services, neighbourhood and community initiatives are run

Representation:	Two Members
Status of Member:	Decision-maker (limited)
Approx. no. of meetings per year:	4
Expenses paid by organisation:	Travel
Insurance provision:	No
Category of Officer Support (see p. 6):	1
Contact Officer:	Housing & Community Advice Manager, Angela Parmenter
Representatives for 2025/26:	Cllr Christine Ambrose-Smith Cllr Alan Sharp

REPORTS FROM 2025/26 REPRESENTATIVES

Cllr Alan Sharp

The Outside Body of Sanctuary Housing is an important part of the district, as with 4,000 homes owned by Sanctuary Housing within the East Cambridgeshire area, the organisation forms a crucial role in providing solid reliable housing for many of our residents.

One of the main areas of discussion was the reduction of unavailable properties, due to long delays in repairs being undertaken prior to the reletting of the property. Sanctuary achieved a marked reduction in reducing these numbers during the year, for which they should be thanked.

However, the main area of concern of Sanctuary tenants is repairs and I think that there should be a more forensic examination of the repairs department and how that works and I intend to pick up on that at the next meeting.

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith (not received)

SOHAM AND DISTRICT SPORTS ASSOCIATION

AIMS AND ACTIVITIES

- To establish, maintain, finance, and manage an indoor sports hall.
- To act as a central body representing all sports interests in Soham and the surrounding district.
- To maintain and improve the provision of all sports learning and recreational facilities within Soham and the surrounding district.

Representation:	Two Members
Status of Member:	Voting Committee Member
Approx. no. of meetings per year:	At least 3
Expenses paid by organisation:	No
Insurance provision:	Yes
Category of Officer Support (see p. 6):	2
Contact Officer:	Leisure and Active Lifestyles Manager, (vacant)

Representatives for 2025/26: Cllr Ian Bovingdon
Cllr Lucius Vellacott

REPORTS FROM 2025/26 REPRESENTATIVES

Cllr Lucius Vellacott (1 meeting held, not attended, as not invited to attend)

The work of the SDSA is crucial to our sustainable communities objective as it provides essential leisure services to Soham and the surrounding area. Its value to the community cannot be overstated.

Representation on this body is important on paper. However, for the second year running, neither myself or Ian were invited to any meetings. We are aware of at least one taking place, via the County representative. Serious work is needed by the body to invite all interested parties to the meetings.

I was pleased that Ross Peers Sports Centre now have a new floor for their main hall thanks to the SDSA and funding from ECDC and others.

Cllr Ian Bovingdon
(Not received.)

BRECKLAND COUNCIL
EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
EAST SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL
FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL
WEST SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Agenda Item 13

At a Meeting of the

ANGLIA REVENUES & BENEFITS JOINT COMMITTEE

**Held on Tuesday, 17 March 2026 at 10.00 am in the
Room 102, Breckland House, St Nicholas Street, Thetford. IP24 1BT**

PRESENT

Cllr Philip Cowen (Chairman)	Cllr Vince Langdon-Morris
Cllr Keith Horgan (Vice-Chairman)	Cllr Jan French
Cllr Diane Hind	

In Attendance

Lorraine King	- Head of ARP
Theresa Mann	- Head of Billing, Benefits and Business Rates (ARP)
Katey Mills	- Head of Fraud, Enforcement and Recovery (ARP)
Phil Butler	- Revenues and Benefits Service Manager (Support) (ARP)
Anna Goodall	- Assistant Director (Fenland DC)
Tanya Sturman	- Head of Service - Customer and Digital (West Suffolk DC)
Sally Bonnett	- Director – Community (East Cambs DC)
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer (BDC)

1/26 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

2/26 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from the following officers:

- Alison Chubbock, Assistant Director of Finance & S151 Officer (BDC)
- Lorraine Rogers, Chief Finance Officer & S151 Officer (East Suffolk DC)
- Jude Antony, Principal Accountant & Deputy S151 Officer (East Cambs DC)

Sally Bonnett, Director of Community (East Cambs DC), was in attendance as Jude Antony's substitute.

3/26 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

4/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

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5/26 PERFORMANCE REPORT (STANDING ITEM)

Phil Butler, the Revenues and Benefits Service Manager (Support) (ARP), presented the Performance Report for 25/26 Quarter 3

The report provided a comprehensive overview of activity and performance across the partnership up to 31 December 2025.

Members attention was drawn to page 14 of the agenda pack, that highlighted the combined position for all partner councils.

Overall collection performance across all partners continued to be strong.

- Business Rates collection was ahead of target across all partners, with Q3 actuals at £243.4m against a £238.8m target.
- Council Tax collection for Q3 was £512.1m, just below the Q3 target of £514.4m but was still performing within the expected 1% tolerance.
- Electronic forms usage continued to rise significantly, now at 151,024 year to date, almost the whole of last year's total.
- Fraud and Compliance targets had been increased earlier in the year to £4.5m, and Q3 performance indicated that the Team remained on track to meet this enhanced target by year-end.

Pages 15 to 38 of the agenda pack provided the detailed performance information for each individual partner council across Business Rates, Council Tax, Local Council Tax Reduction, Housing Benefit, and Fraud & Compliance, providing a full breakdown of progress against targets up to 31 December 2025.

The Revenues and Benefits Service Manager (Support) (ARP): together with Theresa Mann, Head of Billing, Benefits & Business Rates (ARP) and Katey Mills, Head of Fraud, Enforcement & Recovery (ARP) then turned to the Service updates on pages 39 to 42 of the agenda pack that summarised key themes and issues as of 31 December 2025.

Enforcement

The Head of Fraud, Enforcement & Recovery (ARP), reported that ARP enforcement continued to perform well with over £4.58m in debt collected to the end of quarter 3, slightly higher performance than 2024/2025. Over £1.168m in fees had been collected at the end of quarter 3, which was similar to the performance seen in 2024/2025 - an increase of 25% when compared to the same period of 2023/2024.

The Team prioritised early customer engagement within the enforcement process. This proactive approach was helped by attending a regional roundtable hosted by the Enforcement Conduct Board, alongside representatives from the debt advice sector. This event proved invaluable, allowing ARP to showcase its methods while gaining deeper insights into the debt advice sector.

Fraud and Compliance

The Fraud Team identified fraud and error to the value of over £3.8m by the end of the third quarter. Four successful prosecutions had also been

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concluded with eight other sanctions administered as an alternative to prosecution action. Six cases were currently working through the court system, and 52 live investigations were ongoing.

The Team was close to implementing civil penalties and were finalising preventative communications together with partner Communication teams and collaboration with all external partners remained strong.

Further recovery

The Further Recovery Team collected over £1.5m in debt in the most difficult Council Tax and Business Rates cases.

Their performance in quarter 3 was below their 2024/2025 performance. This was due to more effective triaging within the Business Rates Team and outstanding debt being collected at an earlier stage of the recovery cycle.

Council Tax

The Head of Billing, Benefits & Business Rates (ARP) then reported that Council tax collection at the end of Quarter 3 for 4 of the local authorities in the partnership was either within the target or the tolerance zone, with East Suffolk being under the target.

The Team continued to monitor impacting factors closely, such as the move to 12 instalments, the potential impact of Valuation Office Agency (VOA) delays and introduction of council tax premiums.

Work volumes remained high, and resource allocation continued to be monitored, and processes reviewed to ensure that the Team was as efficient as possible. This included continued focus on automating processes, and ensuring customers used the 'Contact Us' form where possible, as this was automatically indexed against the customer's account.

The continued focus on paperless billing also continued with messaging campaigns and a programme of events throughout the year to increase take up.

Benefits

Quarterly processing times for Council Tax reduction claims were within the target for all local authorities at the end of Quarter 3, and although quarterly processing times for housing benefit were just over the tolerance of the target at the end of Quarter 3, there had been an improvement in performance from the previous quarter, and this was set to continue.

As previously discussed in the Council Tax update, there was a keen focus across the Billing and Benefit Team on improving performance through workload and resource monitoring.

There was also a continued focus on automation, and the Team had been able to automate 97% of Universal Credit notifications received from the DWP. This helped to manage the large number of notices received. The Team also continued to focus on supporting most vulnerable customers, with the partnership's Communities Team initiative, which referred vulnerable customers to the local authority for holistic support.

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ARP also continued to support its partners with their work using data to identify and support vulnerable customers, with work on the LIFT, SODA and Xantura projects.

Business Rates

Business rates collection remained above target for all local authorities at the end of Quarter 3 and work continued on making sure arrears and credits were dealt with in a timely manner.

Work was ongoing to prepare for the changes to business rates that were effective from 1 April 2026, with additional resource in place within the Team and a focus on getting the work as up to date as possible.

ARP Systems & Digital Update

Turning to Systems and Digital, the Revenues and Benefits Service Manager (Support) reported that Quarter 3 had been a particularly busy and productive period for the Team.

During this quarter the Team successfully completed testing for the MRI upgrades and scheduled the live installations for both Council Tax and Business Rates. These upgrades were essential to support the CTB1 and NNDR1 Government returns, and to ensure all the system changes required for Annual Billing and the Business Rates Reform were fully in place.

Moving into Quarter 4, the focus now shifted to Annual Billing for 2026–27. The Team continued to work collaboratively across the partnership on the paperless billing campaign. Since April 2024, up to the end of Q3, 54,441 Council Tax e-billing sign-ups and 8,977 for Business Rates had been achieved. Bills were sent directly as PDF attachments, which had noticeably reduced customer contact compared to the previous portal-login method.

Social media activity continued and working through a planned programme of initiatives to increase take-up further. The focus in Quarter 4 was the e-billing *opt-out* campaign.

The Systems Admin and Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) Teams continued to support a wide range of ongoing partnership projects — including arrangement manager, refund automation, and moves automation.

In Quarter 3, the Team completed all the systems and digital work needed for the Single Person Discount review digitalisation, and the implementation of fraud services for Maldon District Council.

Finally, the Team was working very closely with the Business Rates service on the April 2026 revaluation and multiplier changes. This work began in Quarter 3 and would continue into Quarter 4, ensuring everything was ready for Annual Billing 2026–27.

Better Customer Experience Programme

Quarter 3 continued to show strong progress, with just over 151,000 online forms received so far this year, including 'Contact Us' forms which was a 43% increase on the same point last year, and close to the total for the whole of 2024–25.

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Around 70% of 'Contact Us' forms were now automatically indexed, which improved efficiency and reduced manual handling due to the 'Contact Us' form linking directly into the partnership's online forms, that helped encourage customers to self-serve and supported automation across the process.

Our initiative using payment links sent by text or email continues, working with an external partner. These links feed straight into online banking apps, making it easier for customers to pay. The Enforcement Team had continued to explore and expand this capability across Quarter 3 and this would continue into Quarter 4.

External providers were still being used to drive paperless e-billing take-up, Quarter 3 included further campaigns. The 'Contact Finder' function had been completed, which obtained email addresses available in the public domain. This had resulted in just over 3,000 additional sign-ups. As a result, by the end of Quarter 3, 26% of Council Tax customers and 35% of Business Rates customers were now signed up to e-billing.

The Team had also been working with external providers to scope three new projects:

Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) across Cambridgeshire, Propensity to Pay engagement, and work on reducing Historic Credits. These would progress further in Quarter 4.

Finally, the on-line forms customer survey completed in Quarter 2, and there would be further focus in Quarter 4 as part of the twice-yearly cycle.

It was noted that a key to abbreviations had been attached as previously requested by Members.

Councillor Hind questioned why tenancy fraud remained below target. She also enquired why 70% of forms were still being manually indexed despite being available online, and whether the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) scheme would be expanded to other counties.

In terms of tenancy fraud, the Head of Fraud, Enforcement & Recovery advised that there were a number of investigations still on-going and the results of two of these investigations would be seen in 2026/27.

As far as the 70% of auto indexing was concerned, Lorraine King, the Head of ARP, explained that all the details from the on-line form were taken to identify the live account following which the process would start automatically - the other 30% might possibly require a little further intervention. LIFT was a Suffolk wide project that was up and running, the results of which were already being seen. Breckland Council was exploring other options through a company called Xantura.

Councillor French referred to the successful prosecutions and in a response to a question, it was confirmed that one was in the Fenland district.

The Chairman, Councillor Cowen, noted that while e-billing was discussed at the Innovation Centre meetings, he acknowledged that many residents still preferred paper copies and enquired if a downloadable PDF option would be available.

Action By

In response, the Revenues and Benefits Service Manager (Support), assured Members that PDF documents could be downloaded but a paper copy can still be issued if requested.

The Performance report was otherwise noted.

6/26 ARP FORECAST FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2025-26 (STANDING ITEM)

In the absence of Alison Chubbock, the Assistant Director of Finance & S151 Officer (BDC), Lorraine King, the Head of ARP, presented the report.

The national pay award, confirmed in July, was higher than the indicative forecasts. Whilst this had resulted in costs exceeding the original budget, these had been more than offset by vacancy savings within the establishment. A recruitment exercise had taken place at the end of January 2026 to fill the majority of vacancies. A second recruitment exercise would take place in March.

The overspend within supplies and services was partly attributable to an increase in hired services costs relating to automated messaging and the wider use of email across all service areas. These additional costs had resulted in significant savings in postage volumes, enabling ARP to mitigate the significant increases in postal costs seen this year leading to cost avoidance in this area. Land Registry fees had also increased as well as enforcement costs for Maldon DC; these had not been factored into the budget.

Members were informed that an amount of £60k had been set aside into the ARP Reserve to fund a 12-month fixed term Systems Support Manager (Projects) role. This role would provide a dedicated resource to manage, oversee and co-ordinate cross cutting technical projects with the partnership. The underspend shown was after this funding had been set aside.

No questions were asked and the report and appendix were noted.

7/26 WELFARE REFORM UPDATE (STANDING ITEM)

The Head of Billing, Benefits & Business Rates, presented the Welfare Reform report, a quarterly report for Members to note.

The managed migration to Universal Credit (UC) was set to conclude by the end of March and the DWP was working with local authorities to identify and support claimants who had not migrated to UC.

An update to the Crisis and Resilience Fund, which was aimed at supporting low-income households and building financial resilience and commenced on 1 April and would replace Discretionary Housing Payments with a Housing Payment element. There would be a phased transition to ensure stability in funding for Local Authorities over the next 2 years.

The three main outcomes being worked towards were:

- Provision and access to effective crisis support
- Improving individuals and local communities' financial resilience
- Bolstering community level support

Action By

ARP would be working closely with the county councils to provide linked up support for residents as well as working with ARP's software supplier MRI on solutions for delivery of the Crisis and Resilience Fund.

Other updates included:

- LHA rates for 2026-27 would be frozen again at 2024-25 levels
- Pensioner triple lock was in place, and this year the state pension would increase by 4.8%.

Regarding planned future reforms – the government remained committed to bring together the administration of Housing Benefit and Pension Credit but had confirmed that it recognised the need for a stable and measured approach to implementation.

Finally, following the Supported Housing Act that came into effect in August 2023, the DWP proposed to link entitlement for housing benefit for supported housing to the new licensing regime and had carried out a consultation on how care, support and supervision could be defined. Further analysis of the consultation was being carried out and would be published as part of the next steps.

ARP was collaborating with Housing Teams in Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire to work together on topics related to the Supported Housing Act.

It was noted that in a recent announcement the Government would be providing £53m to help vulnerable households in rural communities to cope with rising heating costs. This would be distributed by local authorities as part of the new Crisis Resilience Fund (CRF), but no further detail on this had been received as yet but Members would be kept updated on this matter.

Councillor Langdon-Morris knew of heating oil being stolen in his area.

Members were informed that while all households received heating payments last year, future support would be means-tested via the CRF; additionally, those affected by heating oil theft should seek reimbursement through their household insurance.

The increase in cost in heating oil and the delay in companies delivering it were discussed.

The Chairman asked to be kept informed on when and how this scheme was going to be managed.

The report was otherwise noted.

8/26 FORTHCOMING ISSUES (STANDING ITEM)

The Vice-Chairman, Councillor Horgan, updated the Committee on ongoing discussions regarding Council Tax support for the terminally ill which had been debated at a previous pre-meeting. He was aware of significant member interest and confirmed he was working with the S151 Officer to produce a briefing paper for the administration. Whilst existing schemes varied between councils, he suggested that introducing the SR1 form could simplify the

Action By

process without significantly impacting tax collection. Although local data on terminal illness was difficult to quantify, Councillor Horgan welcomed Members to share these findings with their respective councils and come back to this Committee once conclusions had been reached.

Councillor Hind inquired whether ARP had considered including Alzheimer's in the 'terminal illness' definition, as she was aware that other authorities already offered significant discounts for this.

The Vice-Chairman clarified that eligibility was dependent on the stage of dementia; whilst an SR1 form from a medical professional would streamline the process, however, the specific evidence required remained unclear. He pointed out that if many residents already received these benefits, the financial impact on councils could be minimal.

Councillor Langdon-Morris suggested using PIP data to model the number of residents affected by cancer.

Lorraine King, the Head of ARP, emphasised that this initiative sat outside the means-tested Council Tax Support scheme. She supported a proactive, conversation-led approach through the Communities Team to identify vulnerable customers, rather than strictly requiring GP proof, to align with councils already successful routes.

The Vice-Chairman confirmed that Manchester City Council's website already provided the necessary forms. However, as this project was still in its early stages and there was nothing to implement at this point, he asked for a discussion paper to be produced for future feedback.

In regard to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), the Chairman noted that due to Parliament's Easter recess and the elections in May, any updates not received by 25 March were likely not to arrive until after 7 May. Despite this uncertainty, he felt that ARP was positioned to expand its business across any new unitary structures.

The Head of ARP added that ARP had robust workstreams and resource plans in place to future-proof the organisation and maintain 'business as usual' regardless of the LGR outcome.

9/26 NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next meeting on Tuesday, 9 June at 10.30am in Room 102, Breckland House, St Nicholas Steet, Thetford, were noted.

It was further noted that there would be 30-minute Joint Committee Members discussion at 9.30am followed by a pre-brief at 10am.

10/26 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

11/26 PARTNERSHIP WORKING THROUGH SECTION 113 AGREEMENT

Katey Mills, Head of Fraud, Enforcement and Recovery, provided Members with a brief but detailed overview of the report.

The three options were highlighted of which option 3 was the preferred recommendation.

If approved, the agreement would be overseen by legal and would require formal approval from each ARP partner and would also include GDPR and system access information.

The Vice-Chairman inquired about the option to extend current contracts. It was confirmed that this would be included. It was noted that staff on fixed-term contracts exceeding two years would transition to permanent status.

Councillor Langdon-Morris asked about office capacity. It was explained that high levels of homeworking had left plenty of room for new staff across multiple offices.

A question was asked about the timeline. In response Members were informed that ARP had originally been approached in 2024 then did not hear anything for about a year and then last November an email was received stating that they wanted to proceed, acknowledging the process had been rushed as the standard lead-in period was normally six months and ideally should have been discussed at the December meeting.

Councillor Langdon-Morris asked if LGR would take a similar stance.

The Head of Fraud, Enforcement and Recovery explained that while LGR was similar, ARP remained a highly scalable model.

Councillor Hind raised concerns regarding recruitment timelines if a decision was reached by 25 March. She had noted that LGR roles were typically fixed term, whereas roles under a Section 113 Agreement were not and might not attract suitable staff.

The Head of ARP added that whilst roles often started as fixed term, they frequently became permanent for those who decided to remain.

The Head of Fraud, Enforcement and Recovery felt that ARP would attract staff as there were more opportunities for future progression.

The Chairman highlighted that the new authority would be formally constituted in May 2028, presenting significant opportunities for staff.

Councillor French wished the Team luck, noting Fenland's inclusion in LGR "tranche 2."

The Head of ARP pointed out that the Single Person Discount (SPD) review was a "plug and play" model with high growth potential and plenty of opportunities for staff in that area of work.

The Chairman felt that did not matter where ARP staff were located and was something that ought to continue to pursue as it builds resilience and becomes more cost effective for the partners.

Action By

The Head of Fraud, Enforcement and Recovery announced that she had volunteered to attend a seminar for Tel Solutions.

Following a unanimous vote, it was:

RESOLVED that the recommendations as listed in the report be approved.

The meeting closed at 11.05 am

CHAIRMAN

LEAD OFFICER: Isabel Edgar, Director Operations
Democratic Services Officer: Patrick Adams

Mon 14 September 2026	4:30pm
Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) – Vehicle Related Anti-Social Behaviour Update	Lewis Bage and Emma Graves
Community Safety Partnership Update	CSP Representative
Charter for the Bereaved	Marisa Rogers – Jones
Food Safety Policy	Richard Garnett
Budget Monitoring Report	(Senior Accountant)
ARP Joint Committee Minutes	DSO
Forward Agenda Plan	DSO
ECSS Management Accounts [EXEMPT]	Nigel Ankers
Mon 16 November 2026	4:30pm
Budget Monitoring Report	(Senior Accountant)
ARP Joint Committee Minutes	DSO
Forward Agenda Plan	DSO
ECSS Management Accounts [EXEMPT] and Performance KPI's	Nigel Ankers
Mon 25 January 2027	4:30pm
Review of grant to Citizens Advice West Suffolk	
Mon 22 March 2027	4:30pm
Community Safety Partnership Update	CSP Representative
Budget Monitoring Report	(Senior Accountant)
ARP Joint Committee Minutes	DSO
Forward Agenda Plan	DSO
ECSS Management Accounts [EXEMPT] and Performance KPI's	Nigel Ankers

Notes:

- 1. Agenda items which are likely to be “urgent” and therefore not subject to call-in are marked ***
- 2. Agenda items in italics are provisional items / possible items for future meetings.**