



East Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance & Assets Committee

Held at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE at 4:30pm on
Thursday 25 June 2026

Present:

Cllr Chika Akinwale
Cllr Anna Bailey
Cllr Christine Colbert (Sub)
Cllr Martin Goodearl (Sub)
Cllr Julia Huffer (Sub)
Cllr Bill Hunt
Cllr David Miller
Cllr Alan Sharp (Chair)
Cllr John Trapp (Sub)
Cllr Alison Whelan (from 5:50pm)
Cllr Christine Whelan

Officers:

Sally Bonnett – Director, Community
Jude Antony – Director, Finance
Isabel Edgar – Director, Operations
Jane Webb – Democratic Services and Elections Manager
Spencer Clark – Open Spaces & Facilities Manager
Nicola Pema – HR Manager
Richard Kay – Climate Change & Natural Environment Manager
Marisa Rogers-Jones – Crematorium and Bereavement Centre Manager
David Morren - Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager
Nigel Ankers – Senior Finance Manager, ECTC
Lucy Flintham – Community Infrastructure Manager
Rory Thompson - Economic Development Officer
Kieran Carr – Economic Development Manager

1. Public Questions

No Public Questions had been received.

2. Apologies and substitutions

Apologies were received from Cllr Lee Denney, who was represented by Cllr Julia Huffer; Cllr Kathrin Holtzmann, who was represented by Cllr Christine Colbert; Cllr Mary Wade, who was represented by Cllr John Trapp; and Cllr Mark Goldsack, who was represented by Cllr Martin Goodearl. Cllr Alison Whelan would arrive late due to chairing a meeting at Cambridgeshire County Council.

3. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2026.

Members unanimously resolved:

That the Minutes of the Finance & Assets Committee meeting held on 26 March 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

5. Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed Nigel Ankers from ECTC to the meeting and thanked Cllr Ian Bovingdon, the former Vice-Chair, for his hard work over the years.

6. Climate Change and Nature Monitoring Report and Action Plan

The Committee received a report (AB24, previously circulated) providing an update on ECDC's climate and nature activities over the past 12 months and agreeing on a set of activities for the coming year. The Climate Change and Natural Environment Manager presented the report and the action plan set out therein.

Members made comments and received responses as follows.

- The number of ecologists had increased from one to two, aiding the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) duties. The proposed actions were realistic and should be achievable, depending on both the team and external support. While actions for the natural environment would not require additional funding, reducing emissions would entail costs, such as purchasing solar panels, which was a corporate issue.
- Homes at Arbour Square featured solar panels, air-source heat pumps, and electric vehicle charging points, but it was unclear whether battery storage was included. The Government had yet to decide on any registration requirements for plug-in solar panels.
- There was no orchard planting planned this year.
- Some actions were still in progress, but the goal was to complete all targets where possible. A detailed annual emissions report was published on the website, and a follow-up report will be presented to the committee next year to track the agreed actions. If Members required an update in the meantime, they could contact the team.
- The Council has a Retrofit Projects Officer who can advise the public on how to improve their homes' EPC rating and on which grants are available to them, if applicable.

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

Cllr Bailey, as the proposer of the recommendation, expressed her gratitude to a small team for their significant efforts. She described the Habitat Management Plans as detailed and inspiring. Additionally, she acknowledged East Cambs Trading Company and Palace Green Homes for achieving Grade A Energy Performance Certificates for their homes, stating the Council was fully committed to reaching net zero.

Cllr Christine Whelan supported Cllr Bailey's thoughts and highlighted the proposals for great hedgehog habitats.

Cllr Huffer, as the seconder of the recommendation, expressed her support, mentioning that attracting wildlife can be achieved through small efforts.

A vote was taken on the recommendation as follows:

Members unanimously resolved that:

- The Climate and Nature Action Plan and Monitoring Report 2026, which incorporates the Climate and Nature Top 20 Actions for 2026/27, be **APPROVED**.

7. Assets Update

The Committee received a report (AB25, previously circulated) providing an update on Council-owned assets. The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager presented the report and gave the following update:

- The lift repair would take 3 weeks and start on 6 July.
- The Cloisters refurbishment work would be delayed until after the summer.
- 70 Market Street tenants have handed in their notice; the Council thanked them for looking after the property.

Members made comments and asked questions as follows:

- The Cloisters refurbishment work would now start in September, with no impact on costs. Plans were in place to use the family room while minimising disruption. Comms would be circulated to inform the public of the closure and other places to go, but the Council was aware that it would be disruptive.
- The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager was thanked for his work on inclusive play.
- On William Close, street lighting would have just one solar light installed.

Members resolved that:

- The update on Council-owned assets be **NOTED**
- The expenditure tracking sheet (as set out in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report) be **NOTED**.

8. CIL Funding Request

The Committee considered a report (AB26, previously circulated) on the allocation of up to £100,000 in Community Infrastructure Levy funding to the Viva Arts and Community Group Theatre Expansion project. The Community Infrastructure Manager presented the report.

Members made comments and asked questions as follows:

- Sixty-three young people were on the waiting list and would benefit from this admirable scheme. It was inspiring to see the level of involvement among these young people.

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

Cllr Bailey was pleased to propose the recommendation and happy that the funds were being distributed.

Cllr Huffer, as the seconder of the recommendation, expressed her happiness in supporting it, noting that the children of the district loved it.

Members unanimously resolved that:

- The allocation of up to £100,000 Community Infrastructure Levy funding to the Viva Arts and Community Group Theatre expansion project be **APPROVED**.

9. Planning Charges

The Committee considered a report (AB27, previously circulated) on the introduction of an additional charge for requests to determine whether planning permission was required for works for which no current fee was set. The Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager presented the report.

Members made comments and asked questions as follows.

- The fact that residents will be receiving informal advice and not a legal certificate will be declared clearly on the charging schedule, and the provided letter will state that it is the advice of an office, but should they require a formal legal determination, then they would need to make a certificate of lawful development.
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The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Sharp and seconded by Cllr Bailey.

Members unanimously resolved that:

- The changes to the Fee Structure be **APPROVED**.
- The report be **NOTED**.

10. Bereavement Centre Project Progress Update

The Committee considered a report (AB28, as previously circulated) on the progress of the Bereavement Centre Project. The Community Infrastructure Manager presented the report and provided Members with the following update:

- The project remains on track with both the programme and budget.
- Risks are being monitored closely. Section 278 works for the main entrance and permits and internet connections have all been accounted for in the budget. As of 5 June, the contingency fund holds approximately £120,000.
- The cremator from the Netherlands has been delivered and is set to be installed; this will take place concurrently with the completion of the remaining site components.
- Landscaping is underway, with the introduction of trees, shrubs, and seedlings.
- The tribute terrace is nearing completion, and the memorial garden is taking shape.
- Internally, all work is on track, with the chapel flooring scheduled to begin next week.

Members made comments and asked questions as follows:

- While the contractor is still on-site, they are responsible for maintaining the landscaping. After the contractor's departure, a habitat management and maintenance plan will be implemented to ensure ongoing landscape upkeep.
- All the fibre cabling from the site boundary to the comms room is complete.

Members resolved that:

- The progress towards completion of the Bereavement Centre be **NOTED**.

11. Lake View Bereavement Centre, Memorialisation Framework and Fees and Charges 2026

The Committee considered a report (AB29, as previously circulated) on the Lake View Bereavement Centre, Memorialisation Framework and Fees and Charges, including fees and charges for the pet memorial area, such as pet ash interments and full-body burials. The Bereavement Centre Manager presented the report.

The Bereavement Centre Manager addressed the following questions from Members:

- Pets will not be cremated; instead, their ashes will be interred, and full burial will be available for pets such as cats, dogs, parrots, and horses in a designated pet area.
- Pet burials require a legal permit and adhere to strict guidelines, including distance from watercourses and soil depth above and below the carcass.

- Interment fees were individual due to the grave having to be dug by hand; there was confusion over the price for a plot and a separate price for grave digging. Members suggested adding the Pet Plot fee rather than the Pet Internment fee.
- A brochure will illustrate the plaques and provide descriptions; the memorial plaques are small and placed on benches or obelisks; memorial plaques accompany the interment of ashes and consist of a tall post face and an inscription.
- All communities would be welcome and supported in interring their ashes at the bereavement centre.

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

Cllr Huffer, the proposer of the recommendations, expressed her support, highlighting that animals were an important part of the family, and Cllr Miller seconded the recommendations.

Members unanimously resolved that:

- The Lake View Bereavement Centre Memorialisation Fees and Charges Schedule 2026/27 be **APPROVED**.
- The Lake View Bereavement Centre Pet Memorial Fees and Charges Schedule 2026/27 be **APPROVED**.
- Authority be delegated to the Crematorium and Bereavement Services Manager, in consultation with the Director Operations, to make minor operational and supplier-led pricing adjustments to the memorialisation and pet memorial pricing schedule where required.

12. Business Grant Scheme

The Committee considered a report (AB30, as previously circulated) to approve the Council's proposed Business Grant Scheme. The Economic Development Officer presented the report.

Members made comments and asked questions as follows:

- The team effectively communicates their plans to a target audience through a mailing list of 2,000 contacts and collaboration with the Federation of Small Businesses. By using a first-come, first-served approach, they can launch projects early.

(5:50 pm – Cllr Alison Whelan arrived.)

Councillor Sharp, the proposer of the recommendations, was pleased to support them as they would benefit small businesses. Councillor Alison Whelan agreed that this approach was a logical use of the funds. Cllr Huffer seconded the recommendations.

Members unanimously resolved that:

- The Business Grant Scheme be **APPROVED**.

- The Business Grant Scheme will open on 6 July 2026, with all projects to be completed by 31 January 2027.
- The Council reserves the right to close the scheme to any further applications when the funding is fully utilised.

13. Growth and Infrastructure Fund Update

The Committee considered a report (AB31, as previously circulated) on an update to the Growth and Infrastructure Fund Grant Scheme. The Director Community presented the report.

Members resolved that:

- The contents of the report be NOTED.

14. Finance Report

The Committee received a report (AB32, previously circulated) to provide Members with budget information for services under the Finance & Assets Committee and, as part of its corporate remit, for the Council as a whole. The Director Finance presented the report.

Members made comments and asked questions as follows:

Members resolved to **NOTE:**

- This Committee has a year-end underspend of £1,331,912 when compared to its approved revenue budget of £7,969,054.
- The Council has a year-end underspend of £1,990,003 when compared to its approved budget of £19,249,383.
- that the overall position for the Council on Capital is an outturn of £12,518,671, which is an underspend of £4,449,410.

15. 2025/26 Treasury Operations Annual Performance Review

The Committee received a report (AB33, previously circulated) that provides Members with an overview of the Council's operations during the 2025/26 financial year. The report reviews the Treasury Management activity during the financial year 2025/26 and reports on the prudential indicators as required by CIPFA's Treasury Management Code of Practice. The Director Finance presented the report.

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

Members **RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL:**

- That they approve this report detailing the Council's treasury operations during 2025/26, including the prudential and treasury indicators, as set out in the Annual Treasury Management Review (Appendix 1).

16. Annual Report of Representatives on Outside Bodies

The Committee received a report (AB34, previously circulated) that provided Members with the Annual Reports on Outside bodies from the representatives and an updated list of representatives for the coming year. The Democratic Services and Elections Manager presented the report.

Councillor Bailey informed Members that the District Council Network had been rebranded as the Local Councils Network, and that the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) is now known as Local Government East (LGE).

It was noted that there were vacancies on the Internal Drainage Boards. These vacancies were not related to Members. However, the Democratic Services and Elections Manager agreed to reach out to the Internal Drainage Boards to see whether the Council could offer any assistance in filling these vacancies.

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

Members unanimously resolved that:

- The annual reports from the Council representatives on Outside Bodies within the remit of the Finance & Assets Committee be **NOTED**.
- The Outside Bodies List within the remit of Finance & Assets be **APPROVED**.

17. Forward Plan

The Committee considered its Forward Plan. The Director Community stated that one extra item would be added to the Forward Plan: Growth and Infrastructure Fund

It was unanimously resolved to **NOTE** the Forward Plan and add one extra item:

- Growth and Infrastructure Fund

18. Exclusion of Press and Public

It was resolved unanimously:

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

19. EXEMPT – ECTC Management Accounts

The Committee received a summary view of the ECTC Management Accounts. The ECTC Finance Manager presented the ECTC Management Accounts.

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

20. Appointments, Transfers & Resignations

The Committee received a report (AB36, previously circulated) detailing staff appointments, transfers, and resignations. The HR Manager presented the report.

Members unanimously resolved to **NOTE** the information in the report.

21. EXEMPT – Write-Off of Unrecoverable Debts

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

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

Members unanimously resolved to:

- **NOTE:** Three Business Rates have been written off using delegated powers
- **NOTE:** Six Council Tax debts have been written off using delegated powers

22. EXEMPT Minutes – 26 March 2026

The Committee received the Exempt Minutes of the Finance & Assets Committee meeting held on 26 March 2026.

It was resolved unanimously:

That the Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The meeting concluded at 6:22 pm

Chair.....

Date.....