



# East Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a Meeting of East Cambridgeshire District Council  
held at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE  
on Thursday 23rd May 2024 at 6.00pm

## **PRESENT**

Councillor Chika Akinwale	Councillor Mark Inskip
Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith	Councillor James Lay
Councillor Anna Bailey	Councillor David Miller
Councillor Ian Bovingdon	Councillor Kelli Pettitt
Councillor David Brown (Vice-Chair)	Councillor Alan Sharp
Councillor Charlotte Cane	Councillor Caroline Shepherd
Councillor Lorna Dupré (from 6:15pm)	Councillor John Trapp
Councillor Lavinia Edwards	Councillor Ross Trent
Councillor Mark Goldsack (Chair)	Councillor Lucius Vellacott
Councillor Martin Goodearl	Councillor Mary Wade
Councillor Keith Horgan	Councillor Alison Whelan
Councillor Julia Huffer	Councillor Christine Whelan
Councillor Bill Hunt	Councillor Gareth Wilson

*Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Prayers were led by  
Revd Eleanor Whalley, Vicar of Soham.*

## **1. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were two questions placed in the question box.

Joan Wall, President of East Anglia Council of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, of 38 Lynn Road, Ely.

“Regarding the Council’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2020-2025 which says in its forward:

The Service identified a gap in supported accommodation for mental health and learning disability and worked hard to introduce partnership working with The Pringle Group to secure more properties in the district specifically for this client group. It details Pages 12/13 [the Service] approached The Pringle Group who purchase and develops fully supported properties for people with learning disabilities and mental health issues. The Council now has direct referral rights into 3 properties in East Cambridgeshire and several outside of

the district for long-term supported accommodation. We currently partially fund a member of staff with a £7,000 grant on an annual basis. We continue to work with The Pringle Group to identify new properties.

**Response from the Leader of Council, Cllr Anna Bailey:**

“Thank you for putting your question, which was quite detailed, with no prior notification given, therefore I am not familiar with the detail, and I would like to ensure that we give an accurate answer. I also have not seen the FOI request or response and it would be helpful for us to review that as well before a proper, full, and accurate answer is given therefore I would like to take the question away and write to you with a written answer, which would be included in the record of the meeting.”

**Response from the Cllr Julia Huffer:**

“I was not aware that the funding had ceased therefore this has come as complete news to me. I will make strenuous investigations into this issue starting tomorrow morning. I will also consult with Cllr Bailey and Cllr Inskip to ensure the information you receive is accurate.”

**Response from the Cllr Mark Inskip:**

“I am concerned, as I was not aware that the funding had ceased, therefore I will be looking for the explanations as to why this has happened.”

**Response sent after the meeting, from Housing & Community Advice Manager:**

“The Council is still working in partnership with the Pringle Group and still has referral rights into their properties within East Cambs and across Cambridgeshire. East Cambs part funded a support worker for the first year in 2019, after that the Pringle Group were self-funding, and the accommodation was housing benefit sustainable therefore we didn't need to continue to fund this service. We continue to move clients into the accommodation and then move them into independent accommodation when they are ready to live independently. As an authority we are extremely aware of the need for further accommodation for very highly complex need cases, therefore we are launching a new project in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council called 'The Housing First' (an initiative that is supported by our DLUC Rough Sleeper Advisor) we will be funding a full-time support worker for our district and have already got a commitment from Sanctuary Housing of properties that can be used for a very high-level intensive support package for our clients. We are aware of other charities providing services for the homeless and have indeed worked in partnership with The Lighthouse for many years, we have given a yearly donation, funded them to provide our Severe Weather Provision (SWEP) and paid for room hire for the Ukraine Hub, we also gave them additional funding during the Covid 19 pandemic. Since 2019 East Cambs has funded/granted them £82,919. If there are other charity agencies within the district that we are not currently working in partnership with we are more than happy for them to approach us to ensure we are all joined up in ending rough/sleeping and providing relevant support to clients as and when needed. As our Homelessness Strategy is coming up for review in 2025 all changes will be incorporated into it.”

**ii) Question from Mrs Jones, resident:**

When it rains, the street gulleys fill up and it floods the junction of Deacons Lane and Lynn Road with water across both road and pavements, sometimes right across both road and pavements, sometimes right across the crown of the road, Anglian Water say gully cleaning is the responsibility of the Highways authority which blames blockages in the gulleys on the District Council not sweeping the highways adequately.

The north side of Deacons Lane and the west side of New Barns Road have residents' cars parked a lot of the time. Both these roads have Lime trees that shed lots of blossoms in the summer and then leaves in the Autumn, both these falls, in addition to heavy winds bringing down extra branches and leaves, cause a build-up of material on both sides of the road. All these falls regularly block the road, and lots of it rots down into black sticky leaf detritus(which is advised to be contaminated by oil from cars so not compostable by residents) making wading across the road unpleasant as well as slippy.

Sweeping was done fortnightly twenty-five years ago on both roads. Pavement sweeping happens not at all now and the roads are swept unpredictably. The areas covered by cars are never swept.

Despite a recent ad hoc request to sweep the north side of Deacons Lane, asking for car owners to be notified by the Council and for it to be done when residents had driven away to work, the street sweeps can at 7 am on a Saturday and 9 am on a Sunday and swept the south side only.

Could the Council Leader explain and the opposition lead councillor comment on why cannot the Council devise a notification scheme for residents to know on which day a regular road sweep will occur, preferably later in the day, so that if not away at work, they can park on the other side of the roads or in the Paradise car park for the day?"

**Response from the Leader of Council, Cllr Anna Bailey:**

"I have had no prior notice of the question, but I can give some general information and then defer to the Deputy Leader as this is her area. I had a similar case raised with me not long ago elsewhere in Ely, so I am familiar with this as a problem. It does make life very difficult when cars are regularly parked in the same location and we have taken measures in the areas that I was overseeing, to find a way of dealing with that. As a bigger piece of work, it will form part of our Waste Strategy Review which we are getting ready to undertake. There is a regular sweeping schedule, but if cars are in the way, then I can understand the problem that is building up with detritus going down the gully; it can get very unpleasant therefore we need to get on top of it. I am pleased to hear that the ad hoc request was responded to promptly but not much good if it did not sweep the correct side of the road. As a short-term measure, we will certainly look to do what we can, to resolve the problem and

then this issue will form part of the Waste Strategy Review to look at how this can be dealt with on a more permanent basis.”

**Response from the Cllr Julia Huffer:**

“As someone who is surrounded by Lime trees, I feel your pain as they are dropping something all year round. On 10 June, the Waste Review working party is meeting again and both street sweeping and cleansing are part of that review, and this will be more closely looked at to find out what strategies can be put in place going forward. I will consult with the Director of Streetscene and find out what can be done about providing a better service on Deacons Lane.”

**Response from the Cllr Mark Inskip:**

“I am on the same working group looking at street cleansing and it is not just Deacons Road that has this problem. Sutton also has problems with straw lorries going to the straw-burning plant and when the streets are swept, you can see where the cars are parked. I know that work has been done to try and come up with a more regular schedule, but the problem of parked cars has not yet been discussed, which needs to be addressed in the coming meetings. If residents were aware in advance, then I am sure they would co-operate to make it more effective.”

**2. ELECTION OF CHAIR 2024/25**

Cllr Mark Goldsack was nominated as Council Chair by Cllr Anna Bailey and seconded by Cllr Julia Huffer.

Cllr Gareth Wilson was nominated as Council Chair by Cllr Lorna Dupre and seconded by Cllr Charlotte Cane.

A secret ballot was held in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.1. Cllr Goldsack received 14 votes and Cllr Wilson received 11 votes.

It was resolved:

That Cllr Mark Goldsack be elected as Chair of East Cambridgeshire District Council for the municipal year 2024/25.

Cllr Goldsack then read aloud, and signed, the Declaration of Acceptance of Office for Chair of Council.

**3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Christine Colbert and Cllr Katherin Holtzmann.

**4. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR 2024/25**

Cllr David Brown was nominated as Council Vice-Chair by Cllr Mark Goldsack and seconded by Cllr Anna Bailey.

Cllr Christine Whelan was nominated as Council Vice-Chair by Cllr Lorna Dupre and seconded by Cllr Inskip.

A secret ballot was held in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.2.1. Cllr Brown received 15 votes and Cllr C Whelan received 11 votes.

It was resolved:

That Cllr David Brown be elected as Vice Chair of East Cambridgeshire District Council for the municipal year 2024/25.

Cllr Brown then read aloud, and signed, the Declaration of Acceptance of Office for Vice Chair of Council.

## **5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received from Councillors.

## **6. MINUTES – 20 FEBRUARY 2024**

It was resolved unanimously:

That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 February 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## **7. ELY WEST WARD DISTRICT BY-ELECTION RESULT**

The Chair welcomed Cllr Ross Trent to the Council and looked forward to working with him.

It was resolved:

That the result of the Ely West Ward By-Election be noted, and Councillor Ross Trent welcomed as a new District Councillor.

## **8. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair made the following announcements:

### **1) Chair's Engagements**

The Chair referred to the list of Chair's engagements for the year and declared that his policy was only to attend meetings that were of real relevance to the residents of East Cambridgeshire. Highlights from the year included the Armistice/Remembrance Day at Ely Cathedral and events at the US RAF bases.

### **2) Retirement of Tracy Couper, Democratic Services Manager**

The Chair expressed the Council's best wishes to Tracy Couper on her retirement, thanked her for her hard work and stated that she would be a loss to the Council. Tracy was presented with a bouquet from all Members and Officers.

## **9. PETITIONS**

No petitions had been received.

## **10. NOTICE OF MOTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10**

### **(i) Preventing Abuse and Intimidation of Public Officials**

Cllr Lucius Vellacott proposed the Motion and Cllr Wade seconded the motion.

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

- It is a privilege and a responsibility to be elected to a public office, which Members feel proud to enter into. It is an equal privilege and responsibility to serve local government as an officer.
- The intimidation and abuse of councillors and candidates, of any party or none, in person or otherwise, undermines democracy, prevents elected Members from representing the communities they serve and deters individuals from standing for election. It also undermines effective discussion, understanding and accountability for the benefit of local people.
- According to the Local Government Association, this intimidation and abuse is greatly increased with respect to social media, which has greater implications for younger people becoming or serving as councillors or officers.
- Increasing levels of toxicity in public and political discourse, towards both officers and Members, distracts from the material priorities of local communities and is preventing the engagement of a wide range of people and viewpoints in the democratic process.
- Preventative actions, support and responses should be in place to ensure that Members, candidates, and officers feel safe and able to fulfil their obligations to the best of their judgement and ability.

The Council resolves, in response to this information, to:

- Officially subscribe itself to the Local Government Association's Debate Not Hate campaign, which endeavours to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in local communities, encourage healthy debate and support those in public life more generally who may face abuse and/or intimidation.
- Use the LGA template letter to write to Lucy Frazer MP and Steve Barclay MP to ask them to work with His Majesty's Government and the LGA to develop and implement a plan to address abuse and intimidation of public officials at every level of government.
- Subsequently, instruct the Chief Executive to publicise the Council's membership thereof to all Staff and Members and display the LGA

Debate Not Hate posters at The Grange Reception and Council Chamber, and to actively encourage its Parish Councils to do the same, citing the above information.

- Instruct the Chief Executive and Democratic Services Manager to undertake a 4-yearly review (before each full election to the Council) of the support available to councillors, officers and election candidates in relation to abuse, intimidation and safety, and report this to the Finance and Assets Committee and to all candidates.
- To have this information uploaded to a page as part of the new website development, and to display the LGA's Debate Not Hate logo in the website footer.
- Work with the local Police and the East Cambs Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to ensure there is a clear and joined-up mechanism for reporting threats and other concerns about the safety of public officials and their families, including prevention.
- Take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of councillors, candidates and officers, whether in person or otherwise, and support them to uphold the most exemplary standards of respectful debate, individual accountability and public service.

Cllr Vellacott congratulated the Chair on his re-election and stated that the Motion had been the result of cross-party working and recognised the increasing problem of abuse and intimidation facing Councillors, Officers and Candidates. Local changes were necessary to address this issue. Councillors and Officers were highly regarded, but those who spoke up for their communities often experienced baseless accusations, threats, and unnecessary attacks on their character. The online world made it difficult to escape these attacks, especially for younger individuals. These attacks undermined respect, productive conversation, effective communication and accountability. Therefore, East Cambridgeshire District Council would officially support the Local Government Association's Debate not Hate Campaign. This Campaign showed that the Council stood behind its Councillors, Candidates and Officers and wanted the community to understand their roles and show mutual respect. All support would be evaluated, and any incidents would be documented and reported to the Finance & Assets Committee before each District Council Election. This information would be made public on the Council's website and the Council would collaborate with the Police and the Community Safety Partnership to eliminate threats to public officials. The Council follows strict standards of respect and expects others to do the same in return.

Cllr Wade seconded Cllr Vellacott's motion and mentioned as a new Councillor, she was thankful for the support given by officers and Members. She suggested that it would be helpful for new Councillors to meet and share their experiences and contribute to the 2027 induction programme for new Councillors. Cllr Wade also mentioned the importance of following guidelines on safe engagement from national and council sources and suggested monitoring cases of inappropriate behaviour towards Councillors. Cllr Wade emphasised the need for truthful communication and the allowance of different opinions in debates and urged all Councillors to support the Motion.

Cllr Sharp welcomed the cross-party Motion and mentioned that a similar one had been approved at Cambridgeshire County Council. He reminded Members that the Motion would also protect officers who might face abuse and, encouraged all Councillors to back the Motion.

The Leader expressed her support for the Motion and the cross-party working involved, as she had experienced abuse, received threatening messages and faced negative online comments. Members needed to stand by each other, and she encouraged them to support the Motion.

Cllr Alison Whelan stated that Members should consider how their words might provoke supporters to act inappropriately. She expressed hope that openly discussing this issue, would show disengaged individuals that Members were there to assist residents.

Cllr Goldsack explained he had seconded the same Motion at Cambridgeshire County Council and would take responsibility for setting up an annual meeting to engage with new Councillors.

Cllr Vellacott proposed an amendment to the Motion to include the proposed annual meeting for new Members, this amendment was agreed with the seconder, Cllr Wade.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was declared to be unanimously carried.

## **(ii) Two Child Limit to Benefit Payments**

The Two-child limit to benefit payments was introduced in 2017. It prevents families from claiming Child Tax Credit or Universal Credit for more than two children in the household.

Council notes the recent research conducted by the End Child Poverty Coalition which has found that:

- 1.5 million children in the UK live in households subject to the two-child limit on benefit payments. That is roughly one in ten children in the UK.
- In 2023/24 the two-child limit cost families up to £3,235 per child each year.
- There is a strong correlation between families affected by the two-child limit and those who are living in poverty.
- Scrapping the two-child limit would lift 250,000 children out of poverty overnight, and significantly reduce the level of poverty that a further 850,000 children live in.
- Scrapping the two-child limit would cost £1.3 billion, however, it is estimated that child poverty costs the economy £39 billion each year.

In East Cambridgeshire, 1,160 children in 330 households are currently affected by the two-child limit to benefit payments. That is 6 per cent of all



children in the authority area. At the same time, 3,226 local children are living in poverty.

The Council strongly believes that the two-child limit to benefit payments is a cruel and harmful policy that should be scrapped. Research from the University of York has shown its introduction has had no positive impacts on employment and earnings. Instead, it has dragged hundreds of local families into poverty.

Council resolves to:

- Instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister indicating East Cambridgeshire's strong belief that the two-child limit to benefit payments should be scrapped—which would help 1,160 children living in East Cambridgeshire.
- Further instruct the Chief Executive to write to both MPs covering the East Cambridgeshire area, asking them to commit their public support to the campaign to end the two-child limit to benefit payments.

Cllr Cane proposed the Motion and stated that poverty did not have a single definition. It was generally understood that individuals, families and groups were considered to be living in poverty when they lacked the resources to access a proper diet, participate in activities, and have living conditions and amenities that were considered standard and accepted in society. Children born into poverty were at a higher risk of being underweight at birth, faced challenges in survival during their first year of life, suffered from asthma and other childhood illnesses, experienced poor mental health, and struggled to meet educational milestones at a young age, leading to slower progress in secondary school. These factors can have long-term effects on their education achievements, job prospects and earning potential. It has been suggested that removing the two-child limit on benefits could help lift a significant number of children out of poverty. In East Cambridgeshire, there were 3,226 children experiencing poverty and half of them belonged to households impacted by the two-child limit policy. The estimated cost of removing the two-child cap was £1.3 billion. Allowing children to remain in poverty came at an annual cost of approximately £39 billion. Cllr Cane emphasised the importance of all Members supporting the Motion. Additionally, an amendment had been made to the recommendations to ensure that the letters were sent on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024. This adjustment was necessary as a General Election had been called on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2024, before the Motion was submitted.

The Leader clarified that restricting the number of children was not within the jurisdiction of East Cambridgeshire District Council and alternative methods could yield the same outcome. There has been a significant decrease in the number of children who live in poverty since 2009/10, with evidence suggesting that parental employment played a key role in reducing the risk of long-term poverty. Efforts have been made to enhance employment opportunities, including providing 30 hours of free childcare. Additional financial support had prevented 1.3 million from falling into poverty in 2022/23, while the National Living Wage had also seen an increase. Cllr Bailey believed that the Government's strategy was fair and proportionate, noting that the restriction did

not apply to expenses relating to care, free school meals and child benefits. As a result, Cllr Bailey was in favour of the Government's approach to this matter, she did not support the Motion.

Cllr Trapp expressed that the situation was devastating and emphasised that no child should go hungry. As a result, he affirmed his support for the Motion.

Cllr Vellacott acknowledged Cllr Trapp's input but noted there were measures in place to assist those with the lowest income. He expressed his inability to support the Motion as it did not propose any specific action for the Members.

As seconder to the Motion, Cllr Inskip emphasised that the Council had previously communicated with the MP about community energy. He expressed concern that failing to take similar action now would be contradictory and disagreed with the Leader's opinion that the current policy was appropriate; he asserted that every child should have an equal opportunity for a good beginning in life. Therefore, he urged Members to support the Motion.

Cllr Cane, as proposer, concluded by urging Members to support the Motion requesting the new government to eliminate the policy. He emphasised that the policy was not financially effective and highlighted the importance of ensuring that all children had access to proper nutrition and adequate rest.

The Motion was lost, with 11 votes in favour, 12 against and 3 abstentions.

### **(iii) Accessible Play**

This Council:

**Acknowledges the Essential Role of Play:** Believes that opportunities for outdoor play should be accessible to and inclusive of all children and young people. Recognizes its role in ensuring this is the case for playgrounds under its control and in promoting high standards of inclusivity in playgrounds maintained by other bodies, including parish councils.

**Addresses Accessibility Concerns:** Notes that not all current playgrounds meet the needs of children and young people with disabilities, including but not limited to children and young people using wheelchairs or special educational needs, including but not limited to children and young people with autism, and commits to addressing these gaps.

**Playgrounds as Essential Community Hubs:** All children and young people have a right to play, which must be supported and reflected in our playgrounds. They are essential for community engagement and childhood development and must be designed and built with inclusivity as a foundational principle.

This Council resolves to:

1. **Audit and Assess:** Undertake or commission an audit of all playgrounds within East Cambridgeshire, including those managed by external

- bodies, to assess levels of inclusive provision and identify areas needing improvement.
2. Strategic Reporting: Receive a report to the appropriate Committee detailing the outcomes of the audit, along with a proposed council policy on inclusive play that sets specific, actionable standards for all playgrounds in the East Cambridgeshire area.
  3. Funding and Implementation: Cost a programme to increase the inclusivity of its playgrounds to the standards agreed in the policy. Identify potential sources of funding and explore the feasibility of directing specific funds to parish councils for the development or enhancement of their playground facilities and consider how to fund accessibility improvements in play areas maintained by developers.
  4. Community and Parish Council Engagement: Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to increase awareness and knowledge of inclusive play needs among all local parishes in East Cambridgeshire. Encourage parish councils to apply these inclusivity standards in their playground projects, ensuring local community involvement in the planning process, especially when developers are required to provide play areas.
  5. Planning and Collaboration: Work closely with its planning department to integrate inclusivity expertise into the planning and approval processes for new developments. Ensure that new playgrounds meet high standards of inclusivity from the outset. Actively consult with parents and carers of children and young people with SEND needs in collaboration with the Parish Council during the planning and design phases of the playground.
  6. Transparency: Ensure the local community is made aware of accessible features and inclusive equipment in local playgrounds via effective channels, including the ECDC website, social media platforms, and information boards.

Cllr Akinwale proposed the Motion, emphasising the importance of inclusive public spaces in fostering a cohesive community where everyone felt welcomed and had equal opportunities. She expressed gratitude for the cross-party support in promoting inclusivity in East Cambridgeshire's playgrounds.

Cllr Pettitt thanked Cllr Akinwale for the Motion and mentioned that she and Cllr Huffer had collaborated with the landowners and developers of Kennett Garden Village to ensure that the playgrounds were designed with innovation in mind. The playgrounds featured sand pits containing buried fossils, sound pipes, forts, tractors, lavender, trees, flowers and bulbs in vibrant colours and various textures, all tailored for individuals with sensory needs. Additionally, there was an open space with accessible play equipment and a pond. The landowners are acknowledged for their crucial role in the development of the playgrounds. The Motion would enable the Council to offer high-quality and inclusive play opportunities for all children.

Cllr Vellacott concurred with Cllr Pettitt's view that play areas should be open to all children, and this Motion was designed to enhance inclusivity. It was crucial to work with Parish Councils, as they were responsible for the upkeep

of playgrounds, and Members should support and urge Parish Councils to provide the necessary information.

Cllr Cane expressed her endorsement of the Motion, emphasising the significance of inclusive play for all individuals. Parish Councils would welcome guidance and support from the Council to ensure the creation of inclusive play areas. Cllr Cane fully supported the cross-party Motion.

The Chair acknowledged the cross-party support for the Motion concurred with Members on the importance of accessibility in all areas and was happy to support the Motion.

As the seconder of the Motion, Cllr Sharp thanked Cllr Akinwale for proposing the Motion and hoped for unanimous support from Members

In conclusion, Cllr Akinwale, as the proposer of the Motion, thanked Members for their support and highlighted that the Motion would bring about positive change.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was declared to be unanimously carried.

#### **11. NOTICE OF RECISSION MOTION UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 20**

The Council formally rescinds paragraph (iii) of the motion in relation to the Constitutional Review Working Party (ref: 20 February 2024, Agenda Item 17 paragraph (iii)).

The Council notes the application of Council procedure rules to the Council's Committees as defined in the Constitution (ref: 4 (1a) paragraph 27.2).

The Council instructs the Chief Executive to produce a written guidance note to members, specifically to:

- recognise the importance of scrutiny in local authorities. In a committee system, committees are the place where this happens and where questioning and debate should happen
- reiterate the Council procedure rules as they apply to Council committees
- confirm the cessation of written questions from members to officers
- confirm that questions from members to officers without notice should be pertinent to the agenda item and at the discretion of the Chair
- recognise the necessary discretion to the Chairs of the Council's Regulatory committees
- confirm the requirement for regular briefings between opposition spoke persons and the relevant senior officers, in addition to the requirement for briefings with the Chair/Vice-Chair and relevant senior officers

Proposer: Councillor Anna Bailey

Secunder: Councillor Lorna Dupre

Councillor: Councillor Alan Sharp

Councillor: Councillor Kelli Pettitt

Councillor: Councillor Lucius Vellacott

Cllr Bailey, as the Leader, proposed the Motion which was seconded by Cllr Dupre. Cllr Bailey thanked the Chair, Deputy Leader and the Liberal Democrats for their positive contribution to the meeting that resulted in the agreed Motion. She emphasised the significance of adhering to the Council's procedural rules outlined in the Constitution, highlighting the importance of Committees operating in a manner consistent with Full Council meetings, including following established practices and guidelines. Cllr Bailey was proud of the Council's Committee System, highlighting its inclusive nature that enabled all Members to contribute to policy formulation and decision-making processes. Scrutiny was crucial and the Council will contact the Local Government Association to seek guidance on how to improve scrutiny within a committee system, as the existing committees were primarily self-scrutinising. She encouraged Members to utilise briefings with officers to address any queries, which would facilitate discussions during committee meetings. The aim was to minimise the need for questions during the meetings since Members would already be well informed. It was hoped this guidance would enhance debate and increase participation from all Members.

Cllr Vellacott clarified that questions would not be removed, but rather help make the process more efficient and ensure Members were prepared for debates. It was important to scrutinise each other instead of focusing on officers, as this would keep discussions on track and improve effectiveness in decision-making.

Cllr Dupre apologised for arriving late and thanked the Chair for enabling collaboration in achieving mutual agreement. Despite East Cambridgeshire functioning under a Committee System, oversight was deemed necessary and there was a lack of guidance on this matter. A joint letter should be drafted highlighting this. It was acknowledged that there should be an opportunity to question proposals, challenge them, and ensure accountability. It was pleasing to see the decision reversed and improvements made to Member briefings about upcoming issues and the evolution of proposals, which would enhance their understanding. Cllr Dupre welcomed these advancements as they would serve to enhance the knowledge of Members.

The Chair thanked the Leaders and Deputies of both parties and was pleased with the result. This demonstrated the potential for positive outcomes and was the appropriate action.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was declared to be unanimously carried.

## **12. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

Two questions were received, and responses given as follows:

### **1) Question from Councillor Lucius Vellacott to Councillor Alison Whelan:**

“Cambridgeshire County Council currently decides on blanket 20mph zones in East Cambridgeshire in private delegated decision meetings, with very limited public consultation, rather than in a public meeting of the authority. Does Cllr Whelan believe Cambridgeshire County Council should continue with this approach?”

**Response from the Cllr Alison Whelan**

“Thank you, Cllr Vellacott, for your question which was wholly expected, and you will be pleased to know, that despite my illness and medication, I have taken the time to come here and answer this question. Cambridgeshire County Council follows required procedures for Highways decisions, and some of these are done through delegated powers by the officers, informed by public consultation, and that is what happened in Ely. The City of Ely Council brought forward this proposal and a brief review of their Council minutes sees this issue minuted eight times in 2021/22 as well as at other times in their committees and working groups. There was public consultation, which was in no way limited, and even Conservatives opposing the consultation were helping to publicise it. There were multiple social media sites that covered the story, multiple news websites, local radio, several front-page stories in the local press. We posted leaflets through the doors of a large number of homes and handed out leaflets in the Market Place, asking people to respond to the consultation, that was until East Cambs Market Staff incorrectly told us to stop doing so. It is interesting to see that of the few people contacting me to complain about the scheme, a frequent theme emerged, they do not use social media, they do not read local papers, listen to the radio, or read the news websites. When asked what else could be done, they suggested putting things through doors, something we had actually done to some of them and still they did not recall seeing it. Consultation processes clearly do not reach everyone, and I suggest they never can, there are always improvements that can be made, and we should be reviewing that, after every consultation and after every new policy. But a quick search of social media shows that there was significant imprints of the plans over the extended consultation period for the 20mph Scheme. People often do not take the time to respond to consultations and I would like to thank all of those who did, each of whom received a response from the officers concerned. But all consultations prove challenging. A consultation by this Council, covering the wider area of the whole of East Cambridgeshire, on an issue of great public importance, £9.6m of developer contributions being spent on a crematorium, received fewer responses despite being for a larger area, and 85% of those showing a view were opposed to the plans. Cllr Vellacott will be pleased to know that I have received more comments from residents thanking the Councils for implementing the scheme than opposing it, despite calls from his colleagues to write directly to me expressing their opposition. Of course, it is easy to see the purpose of this question, which is no more than electioneering, otherwise, there would be a paper to this meeting, seeking to improve the way consultations are carried out at this Council. We also should remember the half-century war against

non-motorised users, that has been waged by many governments and councils. Thank you.”

**2) Question from Councillor Cllr Lorna Dupre to the Leader of the Council Cllr Anna Bailey:**

“Residents in the area I represent have been delighted to hear of the new bus routes and enhanced bus services which will soon be forthcoming as a result of the increase in the Mayor’s Precept. Not least of these is the proposal for a bus from Ely through Sutton to the guided busway stop at Longstanton, opening up the prospect for my constituents of onward travel to Cambridge Regional College, the Science Park, Addenbrooke’s, St Ives, Huntingdon and Hinchingsbrooke—something I have been championing for a very long time.

This and other enhancements to public transport across East Cambridgeshire, including services from Soham via the Swaffhams to Cambridge and improvements on the B1102 corridor, will open up new opportunities for many residents with no access to a private car, and for those who cannot drive or who want or need to move away from private to public transport. What explanation will the Leader of the Council give for her vote against the funding which is making these improvements possible?”

**Response from the Leader, Cllr Anna Bailey:**

“Thank you to Councillor Dupré for the question because it does allow me to explain myself exactly and I very much appreciate Councillor Dupré having championed the idea that, in fact, Conservatives first put forward in 2019, when young Beth Skellen proposed the idea of a bus from Sutton to the guided busway at Longstanton, it first appeared in literature, in her election leaflet and I was delighted to see the Conservatives idea being adopted by Councillor Dupré in her literature after that. It will be interesting to see what sort of patronage it gets, and I hope Cllr Dupré, and I am sure she will, continues to champion its cause in her villages. Cllr Dupré is correct in that I did not support the mayor’s 200% increase to his Council Tax precept; Cllr Dupré will know well that this Council stands on a proud record of 11 years without the need to increase our share of Council Tax bills and she should therefore not be surprised that I did not support the Mayor’s precept in the first place of his 200% increase this year and that is mainly because his precept increase was not necessary.

- 1) The Mayor came into office having stated that he had no plans to introduce a mayoral precept, despite the fact that he wanted to improve buses, so he u turned.
- 2) There was £10 to £15 million of headroom in the CPCA revenue budget, the increase was unnecessary.
- 3) East Cambs residents that responded to the CPCA consultation on this matter were against the idea; 66% of them said they were not willing to pay the precept to fund buses, so the East Cambs residents did not support the idea and I support them.
- 4) The Mayor and his Liberal Democrat and Labour colleagues on the Board, are letting down the people of Littleport, Ely, Stretham

and Little Thetford who are now paying that 200% increase in the Mayoral precept, when their No. 9 bus service has been hollowed out to the point of being unusable; they don't feel that they are getting a great deal out of this, and I am working night and day to try and improve that situation.

- 5) The Mayor failed to win bus improvement money from the Government, every single combined authority with a directly elected Mayor got tens of millions of pounds for bus improvements, except ours. Some got hundreds of millions and I think in two cases it was over a billion pounds.
- 6) Our Mayor, unfortunately, is running a dysfunctional authority - things are improving, but in the first three years he has been spending taxpayers money on large exit payments to staff. The CPCA is still under 'a best value notice,' which means they are not spending taxpayers money properly and funding is still being withheld. So, I do not support taxpayers having to foot the bill for the personal failings of the Mayor.
- 7) The Mayor has failed to carry out timely bus reforms. I will not sanction charging Council Taxpayers to continue subsidising unsustainable bus routes, like the 7A, which continues to cost taxpayers £250 per passenger return journey.
- 8) The answer to Cambridgeshire's transport problems is ultimately not just buses, a well-functioning transport system is one that people want to use because it is so good, so quick, so efficient, accessible, and cheap, that it is better than the car and what we need is a 21st century, turn-up and go public transport system for our county."

**13. LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, GROUP LEADERS AND DEPUTY GROUP LEADERS**

Council considered a report (Z1, previously circulated) containing details of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council; Political Groups; and Group Leaders and Deputies for the forthcoming year.

The recommendation in the report was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by the Vice-Chairman.

It was unanimously resolved:

That the details of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council; Political Groups; and Group Leaders and Deputies for the forthcoming municipal year, as detailed in paragraph 3.1 of the Officer's report, be noted.

**14. POLITICAL PROPORTIONALITY**

Council considered a report (Z2, previously circulated) detailing the political balance of the Council, and the implications for the allocation of seats on Committees, Sub-Committees and other Member Bodies.



The recommendation in the report was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by the Vice-Chairman.

It was unanimously resolved:

That the political balance, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report, be noted, and the allocation of seats on Committees, Sub-Committees and other Member Bodies as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

**15. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES (INCLUDING SUBSTITUTES) AND OTHER MEMBER BODIES 2023/24**

Council considered a report (Z3, previously circulated) detailing the proposed memberships of the Council's Committees, Sub-Committees, and other Member Bodies, as provided by the Group Leaders. The Democratic Services Manager reminded Members that a revised recommendation at 2.2 of the report had been circulated in advance of the meeting and confirmed the deletion of Cllr Inskip and Cllr Christine Whelan as Substitutes on the Finance & Assets Committee and Cllr Cane as a substitute on the Operational Services Committee.

Approval of the memberships detailed in the revised recommendations was proposed by the Leader of the Council and seconded by the Deputy Leader of the Council.

It was unanimously resolved that:

- i. The membership of Committees, Sub-Committees, and other Member Bodies for 2024/25, as detailed in revised Appendix 1 of the Officer's report, with the deletion of Cllr Inskip and Cllr Christine Whelan as Substitutes on the Finance & Assets Committee and Cllr Cane being removed as a substitute on the Operational Services Committee, be approved.
- ii. The appointment of Stephen Joyce as Lay Member of the Audit Committee, be approved.

*A short break was taken from 7:50pm to 8:00pm*

**16. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES AND OTHER MEMBER BODIES**

Council considered report Z4, previously circulated, detailing recommendations from Committees as follows:

**1. Audit Committee – 19 March 2024**

**a) Audit Committee Annual Report 2023/24**

The Chair of the Audit Committee, Cllr Brown, proposed that the Annual Report 2023/24, as attached at Appendix A, be approved.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Brown and seconded by Cllr Petitt.

Councillor Cane expressed satisfaction with the Audit Committee reporting to Full Council but voiced disappointment with the lack of detail in the report, leading to her inability to endorse its approval. She believed that the report should be presented by the Committee Chair rather than by officers. Additionally, she noted that the report failed to mention the resignation of all Liberal Democrat councillors from the committee. The report contained an assessment of risks provided by ECSS, however, it failed to highlight that this review was a significant accomplishment. Additionally, the report did not acknowledge that Internal Audit had evaluated its governance practices, rated the controls as moderate, and suggested further improvements. There was no reference to the revenue from the Community Infrastructure Levy, which revealed weaknesses in the enforcement of controls. This was evident in the delayed issuance of demand notices, imposition of late payment penalties and interest, and swift and consistent recovery efforts. These controls need to be formalised and overseen more effectively to guarantee the full collection of funds. The Council must recognise when control standards were lacking, as this could result in financial losses and potential deprivation of funds for parish councils. Cllr Cane mentioned that she had been part of the Committee since 2021 but resigned due to the lack of adherence to CIPFA guidance. Despite some progress, the Committee did not fully support the Council in enhancing governance, risk management, and internal control procedures which led to the Liberal Democrats withdrawing from the Committee. The Committee made a regressive decision by appointing the former Finance and Assets Chair as the Audit chair, despite CIPFA guidelines recommending that past Finance and Assets Chairs should not serve on the Audit Committee for two years. Councillor Cane expressed satisfaction at the appointment of a lay member to the Committee and expressed optimism that this new addition would have a positive impact. She also hoped that the Lay Member would be elected as Chair to ensure that the Audit Committee had a truly independent lead. Councillor Cane expressed satisfaction with the decision to present an Annual Report to the Council and looked forward to seeing improvements in next year's report. However, due to the concerns she previously mentioned, she was unable to endorse the current report.

Councillor Vellacott clarified that Internal Audit had confirmed to the Audit Committee that the Council's control environment was secure. Financial control and risk management had shown improvement and was satisfactory during 2022/23 and 2023/24. Each identified risk was accompanied by a specific action plan to address it, and there were no instances where risks were accepted without mitigation measures in place. Additionally, there was also no opposition on the Committee to suggest new actions as they had not appointed anyone to the Committee. The next steps included moving forward with the cyber security audit and determining risk priorities at the upcoming meeting. However, it was important to note that the Council currently had a good handle

on its risks, therefore Cllr Vellacott was in favour of the proposed recommendations.

Summing up as Proposer, Cllr Brown explained that he had helped create the report alongside officers, following the same process used by the Combined Authority. He expressed his approval of a lay member being added to the committee. He also mentioned that guidance had been sought from external auditors before his appointment, and they were fully confident in his suitability for the role on the committee.

It was resolved:

That the Audit Committee Annual Report be approved.

**17. EAST CAMBS TRADING COMPANY (ECTC) AND EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE (ECSS) MATTERS**

Council considered (Z5, previously circulated) to consider changes to the East Cambs Trading Company Ltd (ECTC) Shareholder Agreement, East Cambs Street Scene Ltd (ECSS) Shareholder Agreement and Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the Council and ECSS.

The Director Legal highlighted that since publication, a typographical error had been noticed in paragraph 7.5 of both shareholder agreements, as they referred to 7.3 whereas it should read 7.2; this would be amended. There had also been an amendment circulated before the meeting.

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

Cllr Bailey emphasised that the Internal Audit findings for ECSS and ECTC indicated a good level of compliance. She endorsed the initiative to grant East Cambs Trading Company the autonomy to establish resident management companies without needing Council approval each time. These management companies empowered homeowners by giving them control over assets related to their properties, and ECTC would ensure that all Resident Management Companies were well-established and supported. Cllr Bailey fully backed the proposed amendment to section 5.9, which outlined the protocol for a Director to attend a Shareholder Committee meeting for decision-making purposes, with the Board having the authority to select the most appropriate individual to attend for items requiring acknowledgment.

Cllr Cane proposed the following amendment which was supported by Cllr Inskip:

Amendment to recommendation 2.1 i) and ii), delete and replace with:

- 2.1 Council is requested to:
- i. Approve the changes of the ECTC Shareholder Agreement as set out in Appendix 1 (Amended),

- ii. Approve the changes to the ECSS Shareholder Agreement as set out in Appendix 2 (Amended),

iii) and iv) as per the recommendation.

Speaking as proposer of the Amendment, Cllr Cane expressed satisfaction with the Council's prompt response to the Internal Audit report and generally supported the proposed changes. However, she identified two areas that she believed should remain unchanged. Currently, both companies were obligated to present reports to the Shareholder Committee biannually. It was suggested that this requirement be eliminated since all Members already had access to the Board papers. Cllr Cane argued that this was not redundant as the board papers were tailored for the board by company officers, while the bi-annual report was intended for the shareholders and should encompass all information deemed necessary by the Board for the Shareholders. The list of items to be reported was not exhaustive. By retaining the bi-annual reports, the responsibility was placed on the Directors to ensure all relevant information was provided, enabling the committee to pose questions to Directors and senior staff and develop collective perspectives on risks and rewards. The other change related to ECTC and its right to set up Resident Management Companies without prior approval from Council, because this would be expedient. Cllr Cane expressed her approval of the concept of Resident Management Companies if they were established correctly, and therefore suggested that the Council should evaluate the proposals before granting approval. She raised two key concerns regarding the governance of these companies and the funding of planning commitments. According to Paragraph 3.8, all buyers would need to become Directors of the Residents Management Company, with the usual process being that they automatically became shareholders and then elected Directors. Additionally, Cllr Cane expressed the opinion that all unresolved matters must be thoroughly resolved to safeguard residents from bearing the financial burden of any planning obligations that may be transferred along with the land from the Council, potentially in the form of a monetary sum. The Council might contemplate granting blanket consent once multiple companies were operating successfully, but for now, the Council needed to maintain the authority to assess the proposals. Cllr Cane urged all Members to endorse the modifications.

In his role as the seconder of the amendment, Cllr Inskip reiterated the points made by Cllr Cane and highlighted past confusion regarding the oversight of the trading companies. He found it peculiar that the lines between reporting to the Board and shareholders had become unclear. He also emphasised the importance of the Council being able to assess the structure of any potential Resident Management Companies and thus backed the proposed amendment.

Summing up as proposer of the original recommendations, Cllr Bailey expressed her belief that the Council maintained a high level of transparency with the trading companies and trusted them to establish ethical and sustainable Resident Management Companies. While she could not endorse the amendment, she appreciated Cllr Cane's comments.

Following a vote, the amendment was lost (11 in favour, 15 against and 0 abstentions) .

Returning to the substantive motion, Cllr Cane expressed her opposition to the initial recommendations, citing concerns about the Council's duty to oversee the trading companies being undermined. She also raised issues about the Resident Management Companies being established improperly, with all residents becoming Directors, and costs being transferred to the companies through land transfers. As a result, Cllr Cane confirmed her decision to vote against the recommendations.

Speaking as seconder of the Motion, Cllr Vellacott emphasised that the establishment of Residents Management Companies would empower leaseholders to have a greater role and accountability over the freehold land instead of being overseen by ECTC. This shift would effectively return the responsibility to the community. Including residents as Directors on gov.uk was deemed a suitable approach for the operation of Resident Management Companies. Cllr Vellacott also expressed approval for the requirement of each Trading Company to furnish the Council with Annual Governance Statements, with management accounts to be reviewed at the relevant Shareholder Committees, along with the inclusion of Risk Registers in the Board papers. It was evident that ECSS adhered to best practices by incorporating a Conflict-of-Interest Clause in the Shareholder Agreement and making governance enhancements in the Memorandum of Association. Therefore, Cllr Vellacott endorsed the Motion.

Following a vote, the Motion was carried (15 in favour, 11 against and 0 abstentions) .

It was resolved that:

- i. The changes of the ECTC Shareholder Agreement, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.
- ii. The changes to the ECSS Shareholder Agreement, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, be approved.
- iii. The replacement of Schedule 5 of the Memorandum of Agreement between the Council and ECSS with Schedule 5 as set out in Appendix 3 or the report, be approved.
- iv. The Director Legal and Monitoring Officer be authorised to complete the legal documentation to bring in the effect of the decision of i) to iii) above, be approved.

**18. EAST CAMBRIDGE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY**  
**a) Appointments to the Combined Authority**

Council considered a previously circulated report requesting that appointments be made to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority for the

municipal year 2024/25. The Democratic Services Manager explained there had been minor amendments made to the recommendations in Sections B & C of the report:

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Vellacott with Cllr Horgan as substitute and  
Cllr Cane with Cllr Shepherd as substitute

Audit & Governance Committee

Cllr Brown with Cllr Pettitt as Substitute

The recommendations were proposed by the Leader, Cllr Bailey, and seconded by the Deputy Leader, Cllr Huffer.

It was resolved unanimously:

1. That the following appointments and nominations to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority for the municipal year 2023/24 be approved:
  - a. That Cllr Anna Bailey be appointed as the Council's appointee to the Combined Authority with Cllr Julia Huffer appointed as the substitute member;
  - b. That Cllrs David Brown and Lorna Dupré be nominated as Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with Cllrs Keith Horgan and Charlotte Cane nominated as their respective substitutes;
  - c. That Cllr Mark Inskip be nominated as a Member of the Audit & Governance Committee, with Cllr Caroline Shepherd nominated as the substitute member.
  
2. That the Chief Executive be authorised to make any amendments to the appointments to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee, in consultation with the Political Group Leaders, if the political balance is amended by the Combined Authority between now and the next Council meeting.

**b) Update reports**

Council received the reports (previously circulated) from the Combined Authority's Overview & Scrutiny Committee (18/3/24), Business Board (04/03/24) and Skills and Employment Committee (04/03/24), Transport & Infrastructure Committee (13/03/24), Audit & Governance Committee (08/03/24), Human Resources Committee (08/03/24)(13/03/24)(14/03/24), Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee (11/03/24) and Combined Authority Board (20/3/24)

a) It was resolved unanimously:

1. That the following appointments/nominations to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority for the municipal year 2024/25 be approved:
  - i) That Cllr Anna Bailey be appointed as the Council's appointee to the Combined Authority with Cllr Julia Huffer appointed as the substitute member.

ii) That Cllrs Lucius Vellacott and Charlotte Cane be nominated as Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with Cllrs Keith Horgan and Caroline Shepherd nominated as their respective substitutes.

iii) That Cllr David Brown be nominated as Member of the Audit & Governance Committee, with Cllr Kelli Pettitt nominated as the substitute member.

2. That the Chief Executive be authorised to make any amendments to the appointments to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee, in consultation with the Political Group Leaders, if the political balance is amended by the Combined Authority between now and the next Council meeting.

b) It was resolved:

That the reports on the activities of the Combined Authority from the Council's representatives be noted.

**19. ACTIONS TAKEN ON THE GROUNDS OF URGENCY**

Council considered a report (Z6 previously circulated) to note the action taken on the grounds of urgency in relation to the Inter Authority Agreement – Materials Recycling & Waste Transfer.

It was resolved:

That the action taken on the grounds of urgency be noted.

The meeting concluded at 20:30pm

Chair.....

Date.....