

County Council – Minutes

Please note the meeting can be viewed on YouTube at the following link:

[Full Council - 7 February 2023](#)

Date: Tuesday 7 February 2023

Time: 10:30 a.m. – 1:50 p.m.

Present:

S Ferguson (Chair)

S Kindersley (Vice-Chair)

D Ambrose Smith

M Atkins

H Batchelor

A Beckett

K Billington

G Bird

A Bradnam

A Bulat

S Bywater

D Connor

S Corney

A Costello

S Count

P Coutts

H Cox Condron

S Criswell

C Daunton

D Dew

L Dupré

J French

I Gardener

N Gay

M Goldsack

B Goodliffe

N Gough

J Gowing

R Hathorn

A Hay

M Howell

R Howitt

J King

M King

P McDonald

M McGuire

E Meschini

B Milnes

E Murphy

L Nethsingha

K Prentice

C Rae

K Reynolds

T Sanderson

N Shailer

A Sharp

P Slatter

M Smith

F Thompson

S Tierney

S van de Ven

A Whelan

G Wilson

Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received from Councillors C Boden, R Fuller, S Hoy, S King, J Schumann and S Taylor.

112. Minutes – 13 December 2022 and Motions Log

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The motions log was noted.

113. Chair's Announcements

The Chair made a number of announcements, as set out in Appendix A.

Councillors reflected upon the lives of former councillors Wendy Silby, Barbara Wrout, and the former High Sheriff Nigel Brown OBE.

114. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reported that the Monitoring Officer had exercised her discretion to grant a dispensation to all elected members of Cambridgeshire County Council taking part in the debate on the Council's Business Plan.

115. Public Question Time

The Chair reported that no public questions had been received from members of the public.

116. Petitions

The Chair reported that no petitions had been received from members of the public.

117. Proposed Business Plan for 2023-28

It was proposed by the Chair of Council, Councillor Ferguson, seconded by the Vice-Chair, Councillor Kindersley, and resolved unanimously to suspend any standing orders in connection with the Business Plan debate in order to accommodate a procedure agreed by the Council's Group Leaders and circulated to members on 13th January 2023.

It was moved by the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee, Councillor Nethsingha, seconded by the Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee, Councillor Meschini, that the recommendations from the Strategy and Resources Committee, as set out on pages 17 to 19 of the Council agenda, be approved.

The Chair invited the leaders of the groups to make their opening statements on the Business Plan.

The Chair then opened the debate on all sections of the Business Plan and invited amendments to the overall budget proposals.

Councillor Count moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Goldsack, as set out in Appendix B.

Following discussion, the amendment on being put to the vote was lost.

[The voting record is included at Appendix C]

In opening the debate on the main Business Plan, the Chair invited all Policy and Service Committee chairs to speak if they so wished.

Following further discussion, the following motion on being put to the vote was carried.

1. Approve the Business Plan, including supporting budget, business cases, consultation responses and other material, in light of all the planning activities undertaken to date.
2. Following the recommendation of Strategy & Resources Committee:
 - a) Approve the service budget allocations as set out in each service table in section 3 of the Business Plan.
 - b) Approve a total county budget requirement in respect of general expenses applicable to the whole county area of £1,010,552,000 including a levy of £9,878,676 payable to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority for the delivery of transport services and a levy of £442,000 payable to the Environment Agency for flood and coastal services.
 - c) Approve a recommended County Precept for Council Tax from district councils of £371,811,612.69 (to be received in equal instalments in accordance with the fall-back provisions of the Local Authorities (Funds) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 1995).
 - d) Approve a Council Tax increase for each band of property, based on the number of “Band D” equivalent properties notified to the County Council by the districts (240,987), reflecting a 2% ASC precept increase and a 2.99% increase in Basic Council Tax Precept:

Band	Ratio	Amount
A	6/9	£1,028.58
B	7/9	£1,200.01
C	8/9	£1,371.44
D	9/9	£1,542.87
E	11/9	£1,885.73
F	13/9	£2,228.59
G	15/9	£2,571.45
H	18/9	£3,085.74

- e) Approve the Capital Strategy as set out in Section 6 of the Business Plan including:
 - Commitments from schemes already approved;
 - Expenditure on new schemes in 2023-24.

- f) Approve the Treasury Management Strategy as set out in Section 7 of the Business Plan, including:
 - i. The Council's policy on the making of the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) for the repayment of debt, as required by the Local Authorities (Capital Finance & Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008.
 - ii. The affordable borrowing limit for 2023-24 (as required by the Local Government Act 2003).
 - iii. The Investment Strategy for 2023-24 and the revised prudential indicators as set out in Appendix 1 of this paper.
- g) Approve the creation of an Executive Director for Children, Education and Families and an Executive Director for Adults, Health and Commissioning, revising Part 7 of the Constitution, utilising funding allocated through this Business Plan.
- 3. Authorise the Service Director: Finance & Procurement, in consultation with the Leader & Deputy Leader of the Council, to make technical revisions to the Business Plan, including the foregoing recommendations to the County Council, so as to take into account any changes deemed appropriate. This may include updated information on district council tax base and collection funds, business rates forecasts and collection funds, capital receipts and prudential borrowing, and updated grant values from awarding bodies.

[The voting record is included at Appendix D]

118. Item for determination from Strategy and Resources Committee

Treasury Management Report – Quarter Two Update 2022-23

It was moved by the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee, Councillor Nethsingha, and seconded by the Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee, Councillor Meschini, that the recommendation from the Strategy and Resources Committee, as set out on the Council agenda, be approved.

Following discussion, it was resolved unanimously by affirmation to:

Note the Treasury Management Quarter Two Report for 2022-23.

119. Committees – Allocation of seats and substitutes to political groups in accordance with the political balance rules

It was moved by the Chair of Council, Councillor Ferguson, seconded by the Vice-Chair of Council, Councillor Kindersley, and resolved unanimously that the allocation of seats and substitutes on committees to political groups in accordance with the political balance rules, as set out in agenda item 8, be approved.

120. Appointments to Outside Bodies

It was moved by the Chair of Council, Councillor Ferguson, seconded by the Vice-Chair of the Council, Councillor Kindersley, and agreed unanimously, to appoint Councillor Dew to replace Councillor Atkins on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority.

121. Questions

- (a) Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Council Procedure Rule 9.1)

Four questions were submitted under Council Procedure Rule 9.1 of the Council's Constitution, as set out in Appendix E.

- (b) Written Questions (Council Procedure Rule 9.2)

No questions were submitted under Council Procedure Rule 9.2.

Chair
21st March 2023

County Council – 7th February 2023

Chair's Announcements

People

Former County Councillor Wendy Silby

It is with regret that the Chair reports the recent death of former County Councillor Wendy Silby, who represented the West Hunts Division on behalf of the Conservative Party from 1989 to 2005. During this time, she was the Chair of the Council from 2001-2003. The Council's thoughts are with her family and friends at this very sad time.

Former High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire Nigel Brown OBE

It is also with regret that the Chair reports the recent death of the former High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire Nigel Brown OBE. The Council's thoughts are with his family and friends at this very sad time.

Former County Councillor Barbara Wrouth

It is with regret that the Chair reports the recent death of former County Councillor Barbara Wrouth, who represented the Wisbech Rural No.2 South Division on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Party from 1980 to 1993. During this time, she was the Chair of the Council from 1987-1989. The Council's thoughts are with her family and friends at this very sad time.

Executive Director of Finance and Resources

Michael Hudson will be joining the Council on 13 March 2023 as Executive Director of Finance and Resources and Section 151 Officer from Worcestershire County Council where he is currently Chief Financial Officer and a member of the Council's corporate leadership team. Michael is the current President of the Society of County Treasurers (SCT), representing finance directors across all county councils. Michael has previously held senior roles with Wiltshire Council and Hull City Council and has acted as a Department of Communities advisor on local government, worked for the Audit Commission and is a former director with special responsibility for local government within KPMG, the private sector accountancy and audit organisation.

Executive Director of Place and Sustainability

Frank Jordan is to join the Council as its new Executive Director of Place and Sustainability on 27 March 2023. Frank is currently the Corporate Director of Resident Services at Nottingham City Council, leading a range of essential frontline services. He was previously Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director for Place at Cheshire East Council and prior to that has held a number of senior roles leading diverse services and teams in Northumberland County Council and Newcastle and Leicester City Councils.

Service Director: Legal and Governance

Emma Duncan will be joining the Council as Service Director: Legal and Governance and statutory Monitoring Officer on 27 March 2022. Emma is currently the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and is qualified solicitor. Emma is both a former Lawyers in Local Government 'Governance Lawyer of the Year' and has been responsible for leading an award-winning MJ Legal Team of the Year.

Service Director: Policy and Communities

Simon Parker will be joining the Council on 13 March 2022 as the Council's first Service Director: Policy and Communities, bringing together policy and business intelligence with key public services, including Libraries, Adult Skills and the Communities Team. Simon joins the Council from the Department for Education, where he was the Director of Policy and Transformation. Prior to working in central government, Simon was the Corporate Director of Strategy for the London Borough of Redbridge and the Director of the New Local Government Network (NLGN).

Statutory Director of Adult Social Services

Charlotte Black, Interim Executive Director of People Services and our former statutory Director of Adult Social Services, has now retired from the Council. Debbie McQuade took up the statutory Director of Adult Social Services remit on 21 January 2022, alongside her duties as interim Service Director: Adults and Safeguarding. The County Council has commenced recruitment for the role of Executive Director for Adults, Health and Commissioning, which will become the Council's Statutory Director of Adult Social Services when an appointment is made.

Noelle Godfrey, Programme Director Connecting Cambridgeshire

Noelle Godfrey, Director of the Connecting Cambridgeshire Digital Connectivity Programme retired in January 2023 having worked for Cambridgeshire County Council for 33 years. Noelle has led many highly successful collaborative digital infrastructure projects and gained widespread national and local recognition for her dedication to improving digital connectivity for all.

Her energy and expertise in leading the Connecting Cambridgeshire programme over the past decade has brought significant improvements in broadband, mobile and public access Wi-Fi coverage for homes and businesses across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, whilst pioneering innovative use of next generation 'Smart' technology to help to tackle transport and environmental challenges. As a result, most homes and businesses can now access superfast (and faster gigabit) broadband, free CambWifi is helping people get online in more than 250 public places, better mobile phone services are more widely available, and local sensor networks are helping to monitor traffic, flooding and air quality in market towns.

We wish Noelle all the best for her retirement, and we are delighted to welcome her successor Ceren Clulow who joins us from Nottinghamshire County Council with considerable experience of digital connectivity projects.

Awards

National Silktide Index Report

The Council's website has recently been ranked as the most accessible of all county council websites. The national Silktide Index report has awarded the Cambridgeshire County Council website a score of 96 out of 100 for accessibility. This means that the site is user friendly, inclusive to all and the content is easy to find. Thanks go to the Council's Web Team and all those across departments supplying online for all their hard work.

Messages

Huntingdonshire District Council Chair's Christmas Carol Service at St Mary's Church Huntingdon

The Chair was invited by Councillor Michael Burke to attend his Christmas Carol Service at St Mary's Church in Huntingdon. This was an enjoyable festive occasion.

Amount raised in honour of Councillor Derek Giles

During the Council's small carol service at the last Full Council Meeting, £230 was raised for the charity Sarcoma UK in honour of the late Councillor Derek Giles.

Holocaust Memorial Flag Raising at New Shire Hall

It was a great privilege for the Chair to raise the flag alongside the Chief Executive at New Shire Hall for Holocaust Memorial Day. The flag was flown at both New Shire Hall and Shire Hall. 'Ordinary People' was the theme for Holocaust Memorial Day 2023.

Huntingdonshire District Council Holocaust Memorial Day Service

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Sebastian Kindersley attended The Holocaust Memorial Day Service in Huntingdon, invited by The Chair and Vice-Chair of Huntingdonshire District Council. It was also attended by around 50 people and included two hymns, the lighting of candles and an address.

Cambridgeshire Royal British Legion County Conference

The Chair was delighted to attend the Royal British Legion County Conference in January. It was heartening to hear all about the work the legion does in supporting armed forces members and their families, and how well equipped they are to interface with local authorities at times of need.

Pride Flag Raising at New Shire Hall

It was the Chair's great pleasure to raise The Pride Flag alongside the Chief Executive at New Shire Hall. The flag will be flown for the remainder of this month to support the LGBTQ+ community.

Proposed Business Plan for 2023-28

Conservative amendment – proposed by Councillor Count and seconded by Councillor Goldsack.

Amendments to recommendations

Amend recommendation 2 as follows:

~~2. Following the recommendation of Strategy & Resources Committee:~~

- ~~a) Approve the Service budget allocations as set out in each Service table in section 3 of the Business Plan.~~
- ~~b) Approve a total county budget requirement in respect of general expenses applicable to the whole County area of £1,010,552,000 including a levy of £9,878,676 payable to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority for the delivery of Transport Services and a levy of £442,000 payable to the Environment Agency for flood and coastal services.~~
- ~~c) Approve a recommended County Precept for Council Tax from District Councils of £371,811,612.69 (to be received in equal instalments in accordance with the fall-back provisions of the Local Authorities (Funds) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 1995).~~
- ~~d) Approve a Council Tax increase for each Band of property, based on the number of "Band D" equivalent properties notified to the County Council by the Districts (240,987), reflecting a 2% ASC precept increase and a 2.99% increase in Basic Council Tax Precept:~~

Band	Ratio	Amount
A	6/9	£1,028.58
B	7/9	£1,200.01
C	8/9	£1,371.44
D	9/9	£1,542.87
E	11/9	£1,885.73
F	13/9	£2,228.59
G	15/9	£2,571.45
H	18/9	£3,085.74

Replace recommendations 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d as follows:

2.

- a) Approve the service/directorate budget allocations as set out in each service/directorate table in section 3 of the draft business plan, amended as follows:

£000	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Remarks from amendment proposer
Budget Gap in draft business plan	0	16,372	17,610	9,686	15,078	
Revise council tax policy to 2% ASC Precept and 2% council tax	3,492	134	132	135	136	Cut 1% from Joint Administration Council Tax proposal
Reverse saving B/R.6.219 and investment B/R.5.131 relating to winter gritting	-50	350				Reverse proposed cuts to winter gritting
Reverse saving B/R.6.218 and investment B/R.5.130 relating to weedkilling	85	40				Reverse proposed cuts to weedkilling
Reverse saving A/R.6.255 'review of non-statutory services' in Education directorate	75					Reverse proposed cuts to special educational needs budget
Reverse saving A/R.6.256 'family safeguarding team restructure'	352					Reverse proposed cuts to safeguarding teams
Reverse saving A/R.6.205 'mental health s75 vacancy factor'	150	-100				Reverse proposed cuts to understaffed mental health teams
Assumed return on investment from below communities investment		-200				£250k a year investment into communities for mutual benefit
S&P – new Investment into a community cultivate fund	250					
P&S – new Investment into flood defences	500					A matched funding capital pot, with potential to deliver £7.5m of flood defences over the 5 Years
P&S –new Investment into highways maintenance	1,000					£5m increase in funding over 5 years
Use of Just Transition Fund reserve	-4,400	4,400				Unused reserves, that affect no spending plans
Use of Business Change Reserve	-1,454	1,454				Unused reserves, that affect no spending plans
Revised Budget Gap	0	22,450	17,742	9,821	15,214	

- b) Approve a total county budget requirement in respect of general expenses applicable to the whole County area of £1,007,060,000 including a levy of £9,878,676 payable to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority for the delivery of Transport Services and a levy of £442,000 payable to the Environment Agency for flood and coastal services.
- c) Approve a recommended County Precept for Council Tax from District Councils of £368,319,711.06 (to be received in equal instalments in accordance with the fall-back provisions of the Local Authorities (Funds) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 1995).
- d) Approve a Council Tax increase for each Band of property, based on the number of “Band D” equivalent properties notified to the County Council by the Districts (240,987), reflecting a 2% ASC precept increase and a 2% increase in Basic Council Tax Precept:

Band	Ratio	Amount
A	6/9	£1,018.92
B	7/9	£1,188.74
C	8/9	£1,358.56
D	9/9	£1,528.38
E	11/9	£1,868.02
F	13/9	£2,207.66
G	15/9	£2,547.30
H	18/9	£3,056.76

Add new recommendation

4. Authorise the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Leader & Deputy Leader of the Council, to make the necessary consequent changes from these amendments to the business plan documents

Proposed Business Plan for 2023-28

Recorded vote for Conservative amendment – proposed by Councillor Count

COUNCILLOR	Party	For	Against	Abstain	Absent / No Vote	COUNCILLOR	Party	For	Against	Abstain	Absent / No Vote
AMBROSE-SMITH D	Con	X				HAY A	Con	X			
ATKINS M	Lib Dem		X			HOWELL M	Con	X			
BATCHELOR H	Lib Dem		X			HOWITT R	Lab		X		
BECKETT A	Lib Dem		X			HOY S	Con				X
BILLINGTON K	Con	X				KINDERSLEY S	Lib Dem		X		
BIRD G	Lab		X			KING JONAS	Con	X			
BODEN C	Con				X	KING MARIA	Lib Dem		X		
BRADNAM A	Lib Dem		X			KING SIMON	Con				X
BULAT A	Lab		X			MCDONALD P	Lib Dem		X		
BYWATER S	Con	X				MCGUIRE M	Con	X			
CONNOR D	Con	X				MESCHINI E	Lab		X		
CORNEY S	Con	X				MILNES B	Lib Dem		X		
COSTELLO A	Con	X				MURPHY E	Lib Dem		X		
COUNT S	Con	X				NETHSINGHA L	Lib Dem		X		
COUTTS P	Lib Dem		X			PRENTICE K	Con	X			
COX CONDRON H	Lab		X			RAE C	Lab		X		
CRISWELL S J	Con	X				REYNOLDS K	Con	X			
DAUNTON C	Lib Dem		X			SANDERSON T	Ind		X		
DEW D	Lib Dem		X			SCHUMANN DAN	Con				X
DUPRE L	Lib Dem		X			SCHUMANN JOSH	Con				X
FERGUSON S	Ind		X			SHAILER N	Lab		X		
FRENCH J	Con	X				SHARP A	Con	X			
FULLER R	Con				X	SLATTER P	Lib Dem		X		
GARDENER I	Con	X				SMITH M	Con	X			
GAY N	Lab		X			TAYLOR S	Ind				X
						THOMPSON F	Lib Dem		X		
GOLDSACK M	Con	X				TIERNEY S	Con	X			
GOODLIFFE B	Lab		X			VAN DE VEN S	Lib Dem		X		
GOUGH N	Lib Dem		X			WHELAN A	Lib Dem		X		
GOWING J	Con	X				WILSON G	Lib Dem		X		
HATHORN R	Lib Dem		X			Total		9	16		5
Total		12	16		2	Complete Total		21	32		7

Proposed Business Plan for 2022-28

Recorded vote for Motion

COUNCILLOR	Party	For	Against	Abstain	Absent / No Vote
AMBROSE-SMITH D	Con		X		
ATKINS M	Lib Dem				X
BATCHELOR H	Lib Dem	X			
BECKETT A	Lib Dem	X			
BILLINGTON K	Con		X		
BIRD G	Lab	X			
BODEN C	Con				X
BRADNAM A	Lib Dem	X			
BULAT A	Lab	X			
BYWATER S	Con		X		
CONNOR D	Con		X		
CORNEY S	Con		X		
COSTELLO A	Con		X		
COUNT S	Con		X		
COUTTS P	Lib Dem	X			
COX CONDRON H	Lab	X			
CRISWELL S J	Con		X		
DAUNTON C	Lib Dem	X			
DEW D	Lib Dem	X			
DUPRE L	Lib Dem	X			
FERGUSON S	Ind	X			
FRENCH J	Con				X
FULLER R	Con				X
GARDENER I	Con		X		
GAY N	Lab	X			
GOLDSACK M	Con		X		
GOODLIFFE B	Lab	X			
GOUGH N	Lib Dem	X			
GOWING J	Con		X		
HATHORN R	Lib Dem	X			
Total		15	11		4

COUNCILLOR	Party	For	Against	Abstain	Absent / No Vote
HAY A	Con		X		
HOWELL M	Con		X		
HOWITT R	Lab	X			
HOY S	Con				X
KINDERSLEY S	Lib Dem	X			
KING JONAS	Con		X		
KING MARIA	Lib Dem	X			
KING SIMON	Con				X
MCDONALD P	Lib Dem	X			
MCGUIRE M	Con		X		
MESCHINI E	Lab	X			
MILNES B	Lib Dem	X			
MURPHY E	Lib Dem	X			
NETHSINGHA L	Lib Dem	X			
PRENTICE K	Con				X
RAE C	Lab	X			
REYNOLDS K	Con		X		
SANDERSON T	Ind	X			
SCHUMANN DAN	Con				X
SCHUMANN JOSH	Con				X
SHAILER N	Lab	X			
SHARP A	Con		X		
SLATTER P	Lib Dem	X			
SMITH M	Con		X		
TAYLOR S	Ind				X
THOMPSON F	Lib Dem	X			
TIERNEY S	Con				X
VAN DE VEN S	Lib Dem	X			
WHELAN A	Lib Dem	X			
WILSON G	Lib Dem	X			
Total		16	7		7
Complete Total		31	18		11

County Council – 7 February 2023

Written Question under Council Procedure Rule 9.2

Question from Councillor Bulat:

I was really glad to see the Mayor saving the last round of routes cut by Stagecoach, such as the Number 11 bus which many of my residents use from Abbey towards Newmarket. That route - which actually seems, I have to say, seems more reliable today, using it myself, with the new provider. However, some of my residents – in fact, many of my residents - are concerned that we'll be back in the exact same situation, losing the Number 11, and Number 12, and other bus routes later on in the spring.

So, my question is quite simple: What guarantees could we give as local members to our residents on the longer-term solutions to keeping those bus routes open, reliable and efficient? Thank you.

Response from Councillor Nethsingha:

Thank you very much for the question. So, I think we were all deeply concerned when Stagecoach announced the extent of their cuts to bus routes in the autumn and it was a great relief that the Combined Authority were able to preserve a number of those routes. The decisions by the Combined Authority in their budget decision making, I think last week (although the weeks slip by remarkably fast, so it may have been the one before), has meant that there is now enough money in the Combined Authority's budget to continue with those routes for the coming year.

But I think there is also widespread recognition, both at the Combined Authority and here, and certainly I feel, that the current situation with bus services is not satisfactory for the long term and that we do need to find ways to make sure that we can provide residents with a long term and reliable bus service; and one which is designed for the benefit of residents, rather than for the benefit of a company like Stagecoach.

So, I will continue to work closely with colleagues on the Combined Authority to try and understand how we can make that progress. For now, and for the following coming year I think residents can be reasonably content that the routes that are present, will continue to run as they do for a year, but I think that beyond that we need to look for a much better bus service than we have. Thank you.

Question from Councillor Count:

Thank you, Chair. It's interesting that you started off by you're worried about the benefits being given to companies like Stagecoach who on the one hand penalised residents of Cambridgeshire. But my question is about their reward for that.

So, at the Combined Authority meeting you actually passed funding to give them, give them as part of our funding package with GCP, thirty electric buses. Can I ask you who will own those buses that you're giving them? And also, seeing as the Combined Authority that you voted for to give them that money, what will happen to the thirty excess buses that are left over that they will no longer use? Will they go to other areas? Or will they perhaps increase the routes in rural isolation areas? Because that doesn't seem to have come up anywhere, but Stagecoach seems to have done incredibly well out of this. Thank you, Chair.

Response from Councillor Nethsingha:

Thank you for the question. So I- it's been a long day and I'm answering somewhat without notes on this issue, so if I get this wrong somebody can tell me afterward.

I believe that those electric buses will be owned by Stagecoach and that they- that the routes on which they are running will be needing to be within Cambridgeshire. That is something- I mean the bid was put into central government according to the requirements for the central government bid. I think it had to be done with Stagecoach. So, I think that if you really have questions about that, it might be interesting to look at how that bidding process was run.

I think that the additional thirty electric buses are an incredibly welcome addition to our bus network and to our bus fleet and I am absolutely delighted that they will be running. I think all of them will be on the streets of Cambridge, but I hope very soon that we will see more electric buses running across more of the county and it is certainly something that we need to be progressing as quickly as we can.

There are limits on the extent to which we can roll out an electric bus fleet because it depends on there being places where they can charge up. And- and that is one of the constraints on where and how electric buses can be using- be used. There is already quite a lot of conversation going on about how we can increase that charging capacity across the Combined Authority area, and I know that is something that is being worked on very energetically in Peterborough.

So, these thirty buses will make a huge difference to Cambridge and to the high levels of pollution that we see in some parts of Cambridge in particular. I really hope that we will be able to expand this scheme in the future so that it's not just providing buses in Cambridge, but is providing buses for a much wider area. But that will depend on making sure that we've got charging capacity available and that the buses are able to extend for the longer distances that they potentially need to run.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Count:

Yes, so no I can confirm that I believe that you are correct: These buses have been given to Stagecoach and they are indeed, according to your wishes - you just said 'I hope they will be on the streets of Cambridge' – and, yes, I can confirm that's exactly where they are.

It's a shame because we've heard a lot about 'we care about rural isolation and other areas' and you say that, once again, the priority is to get things to Cambridge but you hope that some things might arrive for other areas at a later date.

And actually, you haven't answered, I'd appreciate the answer, second part my question. Have you any knowledge or have you put forward any suggestions to what might happen to the thirty spare busses created by this? Because I certainly hope that isolated areas would benefit.

Response from Councillor Nethsingha:

So, I think in my original answer I tried to make clear that one of the key reasons these buses are being used on the park and ride runs is because there is charging capacity for those runs and they are relatively short, and therefore, given at present this is comparatively new technology, using these buses on comparatively short runs where they have opportunity to charge up, is entirely sensible. However, this is technology which is moving fast, and the quicker we can improve the technology and the more of these electric buses that we can order with longer distance routes, the

more we will be able to use them in a wider network and a wider area, and I know that that is part of what the Combined Authority is looking to do.

On the other thirty buses: Clearly they are buses which are already owned by Stagecoach and therefore the capacity of the Combined Authority to dictate their use will be limited, but I'm very happy to ask the question of them 'what is intended for those bus routes' given that we are hoping to expand bus services across Cambridgeshire in the next few years. Then I would very much hope that it will include improved services for rural areas. And, as the course of this year moves on, I hope very much to see Councillor Count giving all support he can to increasing rural bus services. Thank you.

Question from Councillor Count:

My understanding is there is fifteen minutes to ask questions. This one is on a similar theme, but on a different aspect.

So you may remember, Councillor Nethsingha, I asked you last time how much is too much for- how much is too much for bus subsidises, is it? (What a great time for that to happen.) How much is too much for bus subsidises and you- I said it wasn't a figure. It wasn't actually the response of the Combined Authority, of course, I was looking for. It was actually your opinion on the subject. And you spent your three or four minutes telling me that you were delighted to give me your opinion on that subject and it might have something to do with Ting and it might have something to do with e-scooters and we went round in a big, long circle at which I didn't get an opinion in the end, unfortunately, so I have to revisit that question.

So, I'm going to ask you again. Bearing in mind that you now know some figures for the bus subsidies, what do you think is the cut-off point as value for money for the public, the taxpaying public, for bus subsidies that the Combined Authority which you've recently voted on. Thank you, Chair.

Response from Councillor Nethsingha:

Thank you, Councillor Count. Having spent the day with the Combined Authority discussing this at their budget session, I am now very happy to give you my opinion, which is that there should be no very clear cash decision about how much is too much for an individual journey on a bus route because bus routes serve some communities which are very small; and some communities which are very large; sometimes they serve very vulnerable people; sometimes they are getting children to school; or not getting children to school. There are such a wide range of complex issues involved in establishing what the cost of a particular route is, that I don't think it's appropriate to give you a single figure for what an appropriate level of subsidy is.

What I will say is that the figures that were produced by the Conservatives in their amendment to the Combined Authority were a work of fiction and they make me really angry. There was a whole lot of stuff in that Conservative amendment that went to the Combined Authority about bus routes that cost £200 per journey. That was rubbish. Absolute rubbish. And given the rubbish that we've had quoted in this Council about costs, the misinformation coming out from the Conservative Party is getting worse and worse, and the public needs to know that they cannot trust you.

Those figures that were produced, were- were not including any of the people who use those bus services who are using concessionary fares. So by excluding all of the people using those bus services who are on concessionary fares, you are effectively saying that people over 65 do not count in their bus services. And I think that's disgraceful.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Count:

Yeah, thank you Chair. Obviously they weren't my figures. I wasn't there, I didn't produce them. I didn't make them up either. I understand they were based on officer information. But you are correct, they did not include- So they were the subsidy per return journey for the people not including those on concessionary fares. And I think that makes a difference in two ways: I think absolutely that they count and they should be included; but also the amount of subsidy that they get is also a different group that is a subsidy.

But that goes away from the question which I was driving at, and we know that those figures - the average one in the Conservative amendment was of £82.50 per return journey on that basis. £258 for the most expensive. Somebody's worked out, adjusting for concessionary fare, it might be £200 odd. But the point I'm going to ask is why pass a bus strategy that limits it to £12 - which you voted for - and then say there's no limit? Surely, you're actually in conflict with the actual Bus Strategy that you passed.

Response from Councillor Nethsingha:

So I am still shocked that Councillor Count is continuing to quote those figures, even though he recognises that they are not accurate, and I think they should stop being quoted.

The £12 in the Bus Strategy I think perhaps shouldn't have been in there, and maybe I should have pointed that out at the time. So, if there was an element of the Bus Strategy that is- shouldn't be there, then I'm happy to go away and review that. Thank you.

Question from Councillor Bradnam:

Thank you. I'd just like some confirmation that, in line with the other services that we are seeking to support and continue after the end of March, that this administration is looking to support Service 9 which remained in the changes brought around by Stagecoach, but it changed the route such that it no longer serves the villages. And I'd like confirmation that that route will be supported too, through the villages.

Response from Councillor Nethsingha:

Thank you, Councillor Bradnam. My understanding is that the service change to Service 9 will probably remain on its current route, rather than the changed route. But I do absolutely understand that people who were accustomed to the previous route and want it to go through the villages would like to see it returned. And as we move forward to thinking about what a better bus network might look like all together, I think that that- the need to reconnect those villages with a reasonable bus route should definitely be something that's on the agenda. Thank you.