

County Council – Minutes

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

[Cambridgeshire County Council Full Council Meeting- YouTube](#)

Date: 18 July 2023

Time: 10:30 a.m. – 2:05 p.m.

Present:

Councillors:

Sebastian Kindersley (Chair)

Gerri Bird (Vice-Chair)

David Ambrose Smith

Michael Atkins

Henry Batchelor

Alex Beckett

Ken Billington

Mike Black

Chris Boden

Anna Bradnam

Alex Bulat

Simon Bywater

David Connor

Steve Corney

Adela Costello

Steve Count

Piers Coutts

Steve Criswell

Claire Daunton

Douglas Dew

Lorna Dupré

Stephen Ferguson

Jan French

Ryan Fuller

Ian Gardener

Nick Gay

Mark Goldsack

Bryony Goodliffe

Neil Gough

John Gowing

Ros Hathorn

Anne Hay

Mark Howell

Richard Howitt

Samantha Hoy

Bill Hunt

Jonas King

Simon King

Peter McDonald

Elisa Meschini

Brian Milnes

Edna Murphy

Lucy Nethsingha

Keith Prentice

Catherine Rae

Kevin Reynolds

Tom Sanderson

Josh Schumann

Geoffrey Seeff

Neil Shailer

Alan Sharp

Philippa Slatter

Simone Taylor

Firouz Thompson

Steve Tierney

Susan van de Ven

Alison Whelan

Graham Wilson

Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received from Councillors Maria King, Mac McGuire and Mandy Smith.

152. Minutes – 16 May 2023 and Motions Log

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. The motions log was noted.

153. Chair's Announcements

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

154. Declarations of Interest

It was noted that the Monitoring Officer had advised members that they were not required to make a declaration of interest in relation to Agenda Item 10(c) (Motion from Councillor Michael Atkins), as long as any roles they held as governors or trustees of schools had already been included on their registration of interests.

Councillor Meschini declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in relation to Agenda Item 10(c) (Motion from Councillor Atkins), as a governor of King's Hedges Primary School.

155. Public Question Time

The Chair reported that two public questions had been received from members of the public, as set out at Appendix B.

156. Petitions

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

157. Items for determination from Strategy and Resources Committee

(a) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy

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.

It was resolved unanimously by affirmation to:

Approve the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

(b) Treasury Management Report – Quarter Four Update and Annual Report 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 recommendations from the Strategy and Resources Committee, as set out on the Council agenda, be approved.

It was resolved unanimously by affirmation to:

(i) Note the Treasury Management Quarter Four Update and Annual Report for 2022/23; and

(ii) Increase the counterparty limit for the deposits outlined in 4.13 (*of the report to Strategy and Resources Committee*) from £10m to £20m.

158. Constitution and Ethics Committee Recommendations to Full Council - Proposed Changes to the Constitution

It was moved by the Chair of the Constitution and Ethics Committee, Councillor Bird, and seconded by the Vice-Chair of the Constitution and Ethics Committee, Councillor Kindersley, that the recommendations from the Constitution and Ethics Committee, as set out in the report on the Council agenda, be approved.

The following amendment to recommendation (iii) was proposed by Councillor Dupré and seconded by Councillor Sanderson (additions in bold and deletions shown in strikethrough):

- (iii) Approve the draft **revised** terms of reference for **the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion** ~~the revised Communities Committee~~ attached at Appendix C;

Following discussion, the amendment was carried unanimously by affirmation.

The following amendment to recommendation (vi) was proposed by Councillor Count and seconded by Councillor Boden (additions in bold):

- (vi) Maintain the current position in relation to statutory public health functions for the reasons set out in Section 2.3.3. **and to refer the wider concerns raised by the governance review regarding overall scrutiny and health functions to the Constitution and Ethics Committee for consideration as to what options might be available to the Council to strengthen governance in this area.**

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

[Voting pattern: Conservatives and 1 Independent in favour; Liberal Democrats, Labour and 3 Independents against]

It was resolved to:

- (i) Approve the draft terms of reference for the revised Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee attached at Appendix A;
- (ii) Approve the establishment of a new Assets and Procurement Committee and agree its terms of reference attached at Appendix B;
- (iii) Approve the draft revised terms of reference for the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee attached at Appendix C;
- (iv) Approve the establishment of a new Cambridge Joint Area Committee and agree its terms of reference attached at Appendix D;
- (v) Authorise the Monitoring Officer to take all steps necessary or incidental to implement the changes to the Constitution detailed in this report; and
- (vi) Maintain the current position in relation to statutory public health functions for the reasons set out in Section 2.3.3.

[Voting patterns:

Recommendations (i), (ii), (iii) and (v): Unanimously in favour.

Recommendations (iv) and (vi): Liberal Democrats, Labour and 3 Independents in favour; Conservatives and 1 Independent against.]

159. Committees – Allocation of Seats and Substitutes to Political Groups in Accordance with the Political Balance Rules

It was moved by the Chair of Council, seconded by the Vice-Chair of Council and resolved unanimously by affirmation to approve the allocation of seats and substitutes on committees to political groups in accordance with the political balance rules, as set out in the report.

160. Appointment of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees

It was moved by Councillor Nethsingha and seconded by Councillor Meschini to nominate Councillor Hathorn as the Chair and Councillor Rae as the Vice-Chair of the Assets and Procurement Committee respectively.

It was moved by the Chair of Council, seconded by the Vice-Chair of Council and resolved unanimously by affirmation that the appointment of the chairs and vice-chairs of committees be approved.

161. Motions Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 10

Four motions had been submitted under Council Procedure Rule 10.

a) Motion from Councillor Alex Bulat

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Bulat and seconded by Councillor Goldsack. The motion included alterations from the version included on the agenda, which were proposed by Councillor Goldsack, accepted by Councillor Bulat, and agreed by the meeting without discussion (additions in bold and deletions shown in strikethrough]):

The Council notes that:

- Around 17% of the UK's population live in rural communities. In Cambridgeshire, 47% of the population is rural.
- Cambridgeshire County Council's Farms Estate extends to over 33,000 acres of farmland across the county and has more than 160 tenants. The Estate is the largest public sector estate in England and Wales.

The Council welcomes that:

- Cambridgeshire farmers, including our County Farms farmers, make a huge contribution to our local economy and are integral to our rural communities.
- Local farms ~~can have~~ played a significant role in supporting local food banks and community wealth building, in a hostile economic climate, especially in recent years.

- ~~There have been a number of highly successful local environmental initiatives in our Cambridgeshire farms, supporting our County's Net Zero by 2045 agenda~~
Both in previous and current administrations, our Cambridgeshire farms have supported a number of local environmental initiatives, contributing to our County's Net Zero by 2045 priorities Two such projects are the Soham Solar Farm project and the Fordham based Commercial Solar project.
- We are committed to decentralisation, with a series of pilots due to start this year. A more local, co-operative and decentralised approach to services would benefit rural communities, offering them more control.

The Council expresses concern that:

- The UK's level of food sufficiency is decreasing. According to the National Farmers Union, this decreased from 78% in 1984 to 60% in 2021.
- ~~Austerity policies have left many in rural communities feeling abandoned, due to the decrease in accessibility of local services and the detrimental impact of rural transport poverty on social mobility and equal opportunity.~~
- **National, County and Mayoral policies have impacted lives in rural communities, including the detrimental impact of rural transport poverty. Local authorities are operating in a difficult economic climate with reduced funds coming from central Government in some areas.**
- The UK experiences significant skill shortages, agriculture being one of the industries most affected **by post-Brexit national immigration policies, local demographic changes and other factors.** ~~The impact of Brexit, with many EU workers returning to home countries or choosing to work in another EU country, has exacerbated these shortages.~~
- In addition, ~~the shortage of vocational options locally for many and accessibility of agriculture-related university courses in our region is a barrier for many young people considering farming~~ **the skills strategy of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority has and does impact accessibility of agriculture-related educational and advancement opportunities within Cambridgeshire. This is situated in a national context where vocational education is competing with a focus on university education.**
- Climate change and extreme weather has visibly and negatively impacted our farmers, with the effects on soil, water supply, natural pest control and many other factors.

The Council is recommended to commit to:

- Looking at, subject to ensuring compliance with procurement and changes to procurement rules, **and confirming that the council could actually measure the outcomes**, targeting that at least half the food procured for council funded events is sourced locally and encouraging our partners to do the same.
- Supporting the National Farmers' Union "Back British Farming" campaign.

- Promoting, in partnership with our relevant education partners and organisations working with farmers, pathways and opportunities for young people, including young people from non-farming families, to develop their own businesses in farming locally.
- Considering, when assessing our policies against the socio-economic duty we adopted as a council, rural-proofing our policies to mitigate disproportionate impact on rural communities.
- **Asking the Combined Authority to include specific training to support and encourage future agricultural, agritech and related employment.**
- Asking our Chief Executive to write to the Minister of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to call for protecting UK food standards under all existing and future free trade agreements, calling for protection of workers' rights in the agricultural sector and expressing concern about labour shortages locally and nationally, calling for a more flexible seasonal worker scheme at a minimum for our agricultural sector.

Following discussion, on being put to the vote, the motion was carried by a majority.

[Voting pattern: Liberal Democrats, Labour, Independents and 19 Conservatives in favour; 3 Conservatives against; 2 Conservatives abstained.]

b) Motion from Councillor Lorna Dupré

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Dupré and seconded by Councillor Sanderson:

Infrastructure Levy

This council notes

- The proposal by the Government for an Infrastructure Levy to replace the current system of developer contributions including Section 106 payments and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
- The letter to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities Michael Gove, organised by the Royal Town Planning Institute and signed by 29 other organisations including the County Councils Network, calling on the government not to proceed with this proposed change.
- That while affordable homes are vital, presently less than 25 per cent of developer contributions are spent on amenities such as roads, schools, transport, community spaces, and medical centres to support them.

This council shares the concerns expressed by the County Councils Network and other signatories that

- Infrastructure across the country worth £1.3 trillion could be required over the next fifteen years as a result of projected household growth, but many county areas such as Cambridgeshire already have significant infrastructure shortages, putting pressure on public services and roads.

- The proposed levy will fail to raise enough resources to properly fund both affordable housing and strategic infrastructure; and that moving to a single levy to cover both of these could cause a trade-off between the two, leading to either reduced affordable housing contributions or—more likely—reduced strategic infrastructure delivery.
- Borrowing remains the single biggest source of funding for infrastructure, but under the Infrastructure Levy county councils will not be able to borrow against it.
- The proposed levy will do nothing to give county councils the statutory role in the current developer contributions system they currently lack, and is likely to make the existing situation much worse in two-tier areas, or in Cambridgeshire as a three-tier area within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA).
- Under the Government's proposals there will be no dedicated Infrastructure Levy share for upper-tier councils, despite their being responsible for the delivery of strategic infrastructure within two-tier areas, or Cambridgeshire as a three-tier area within the CPCA. This has the potential to compromise this Council's ability to deliver the CPCA's strategy for transport set out in its Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) through the planning process.

This council believes that

- The current developer contribution system is unfit for purpose, and a rethink is needed on how infrastructure is funded in England.
- The proposed Infrastructure Levy could however result in less infrastructure being delivered and fewer affordable homes being built, and could impact on housing delivery.
- The clauses of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which permit the levy to be used for purposes other than infrastructure or affordable housing should be removed as this could divert funding, which is already inadequate, to other services.
- In 'two-tier' county areas, or in the case of Cambridgeshire a 'three-tier' area, the government should allocate a portion of Infrastructure Levy receipts directly to county councils, and there should also be a statutory duty for district councils to work with their county councils in the preparation of levy-setting to avoid a situation in which all the funding goes to district services leaving no funding for key infrastructure such as schools and roads.

This council therefore resolves to ask the Chief Executive to

- Write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities to formally endorse the representations of the County Councils Network, whilst noting that Cambridgeshire is a 'three-tier' authority.
- Offer to join other local authorities in working with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities to fully explore how Section 106 and the existing Community Infrastructure Levy could be retained, improved and strengthened.

- Urge the Government to carry out further research across different geographies, including different socio-economic areas and areas with different governance structures like Cambridgeshire where a 'three-tier' structure is in place, to demonstrate that the new system will create more affordable homes and bring in at least as much funding as the current system for upper and lower tier authorities.
- Provide the CPCA with a copy of the letter for their awareness.

Following discussion, on being put to the vote, the motion was carried by a majority.

[Voting pattern: Liberal Democrats, Labour and Independents in favour; 19 Conservatives against; 2 Conservatives abstained.]

c) Motion from Councillor Michael Atkins

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Atkins and seconded by Councillor Taylor:

School Uniform Costs

Council welcomes:

- The passage of the Education (Guidance about Costs of School Uniform) Act 2021, which required the Secretary of State to issue guidance to schools about the cost of school uniform.
- The subsequent statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education in November 2021 ("Cost of School Uniforms"), which schools and their governing bodies must pay regard to when developing and implementing uniform policies, and specifically by September 2023.
- The campaign to tackle this issue nationally by charities and MPs; and locally by communities and Parent-Teacher Associations for example through uniform second-hand sales and swaps.
- The efforts made by several County schools to reduce the number of branded items in their uniform policy and support second-hand alternatives.

Council nevertheless notes with concern:

- Reports in national media that uniform costs remain high – a recent survey suggested parents are spending on average £422 for secondary and £287 for primary school uniforms per year.
- Up to a quarter of parents have reported that, because of cost, children have worn ill-fitting, unclean or incorrect uniform.
- Many schools in the County continue to require multiple items of branded uniform to be bought from a single supplier, which is unlikely to give the highest priority to cost and value for money as required by the new statutory guidance.

Council acknowledges the potential merits of school uniform, including improved attendance, behaviour and ethos; nevertheless, it also notes the evidence base for these merits is weak; and that teachers and parents are generally more supportive of uniform policies than the children themselves.

It reaffirms its belief that access to high quality education is a vital right of all children and their families in the county, and that this access should not be fettered by unreasonable costs.

Council further believes that:

- The potential benefits of a successful uniform policy can be captured through simple and consistent requirements, developed in conjunction with parents and pupils, with a very limited reliance on branded items and/or single suppliers of uniform.
- The costs imposed on families by some overly prescriptive school uniform policies are unacceptable, particularly in the current economic climate; further, that this could be a barrier for attendance for certain groups, including pupil premium and those children with no recourse to public funds.

Council wishes to work with and support schools in developing fair and effective uniform policies to the benefit of their pupils, and also highlight the existing best practice. It therefore requests that the Director of Education writes to all school headteachers and governing bodies to:

- Remind them of the new statutory guidance.
- Gather data as to the current impact of uniform policies on families in the county, in particular:
 - a. the number of branded items required by the policy, and whether sew-on badges or equivalent are available;
 - b. an estimate of the total cost of a full set of school uniform to attend the school;
 - c. whether the uniform has been changed in the past five years, and if so whether existing pupils were permitted to continue wearing the previous uniform; and
 - d. support offered to families on low income.

Council further resolves to:

- Analyse the data returned by schools in a report to the Children and Young People Committee -where information is not returned, it may be complemented by a desktop exercise based on public information. The report should highlight examples of best practice, and be shared with school governors.
- Ensure that school governors are briefed on the new statutory guidance.

Following discussion, the motion was carried unanimously by affirmation.

d) Motion from Councillor Bryony Goodliffe

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Goodliffe and seconded by Councillor Bulat:

Motion on fairer access and fairer funding for childcare and early years education, for children in Cambridgeshire.

The Council notes that:

- The Government is increasing the eligibility for funded early years education hours, introducing changes to the age of children that can access this provision and is also developing primary aged wraparound childcare.
- Access to good early years education and high-quality childcare improves equality of opportunity for children from less advantaged backgrounds and increases social mobility.
- It is committed to creating opportunities for children and young people to be healthy, safe and to educationally thrive, as outlined in its corporate priorities.

The Council welcomes that:

- The Government's priority to increase access to wrap around care to benefit working families and support improved outcomes for all children.
- The Government finally recognises the increasing cost of living and exponential increase in childcare costs which burdens working families, particularly those on low incomes and those just about managing.
- Early Years and Childcare Practitioners in settings across Cambridgeshire provide early years education where all children can thrive and enable access to early help and SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) support, despite the Government's challenging funding landscape.

The Council expresses concern that:

- Due to national austerity cuts in local services and the impact of the current 30 hours policy, that the extended entitlement will mean funding per hour will continue to decrease in real terms.
- There is a national staffing recruitment and retention crisis in early years provision, with no adequate funding to make the sector appealing as a career or sustainable.
- The new extended entitlement does not provide sufficient funding and support for training and supervision time for new and existing staff in an already overstretched workforce.
- Decreasing staff to child ratios would disadvantage those who need additional SEND support and impact the ability of staff to deliver high educational outcomes for all.

- The new extended entitlement policy is driven by economic arguments alone rather than what is best for children and their educational outcomes, it is likely to disadvantage those on lower incomes for example through the loss of Universal Credit entitlement and potentially a lack of childcare places for vulnerable children. This conflicts with the Joint Administration's triple bottom line approach and the Council's children and anti-poverty strategies.
- Places for Funded 2's and the ability for settings to remain fully inclusive is likely to be compromised as the focus will be on working parents accessing funded places.

The Council is recommended to commit to:

- Working with the education unions, early years organisations, Private, Voluntary and Independent providers, schools, and parent organisations to call for a significant increase to funding free hours, no increase in ratios and the funded upskilling of the early years' workforce.
- Including in any funding campaign, a need to increase Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) inclusion funding and EYFS specific SEND training to support students with SEND in accessing their entitlement to funded hours allowing staff to identify those who may have additional needs and assist in their getting the right help at the right time in the right location.
- Ensuring the diversity of every community is catered for and Local Authorities have powers to fully manage the early years and childcare market, supporting the right provider offer in the right place at the right time, recognising that some communities require different models of early years and childcare.
- Prioritising funding to support the individual settings to be fully inclusive and ensure that funding for SEND matches growth in the market through an uplift to SEND funding. Identify an early year's complex need funding stream to ensure the needs of our youngest children with complex needs are met.
- Producing a report to Children & Young People's Committee with specific regard to the new early years policy changes including, funding rates, access, feasibility, staffing, sufficiency, and barriers to quality, and review the potential impacts of this policy with particular focus on the impact of Funded 2's place availability and the current universal offer with a focus on the county's disadvantaged areas, children, and families.

Following discussion, on being put to the vote, the motion was carried by a majority.

[Voting pattern: Liberal Democrats, Labour, Independents and 19 Conservatives in favour; 2 Conservatives against; 1 Conservative abstained.]

162. Questions

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

One question was submitted under Council Procedure Rule 9.1 of the Council's Constitution attached at Appendix C.

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

No questions were submitted under Council Procedure Rule 9.2 of the Council's Constitution.

Chair

Chair's Announcements

Catriona Taylor

It is with deep regret that the Chair reports the recent death of Catriona Taylor. Cat worked in the IT and Digital Services Team.

The Council's thoughts are with her family, friends, and colleagues at this very sad time.

Awards

Silver Award for the Prevention and Early Intervention Enhanced Response Team

Cambridgeshire County Council's Prevention & Early Intervention Enhanced Response Team have received a Silver Award for their work supporting the NHS's Emergency Care Improvement Support initiative.

The initiative aims to prevent deconditioning (the decline in physical function of the body as a result of physical inactivity and/or bedrest) by encouraging all sectors in health and social care settings to come up with innovative and fun ways to promote physical activity and wellbeing - where it is hoped these will reduce deconditioning and associated harms, improve hospital discharges, and patient outcomes.

The Enhanced Response Team have received a Silver Award as they were able to evidence that such initiatives were making a difference to the lives of those they work with. The team were nominated by the East of England Regional Team for "working with system partners to support people in their own homes and respond to people who have tripped and fallen, thereby avoiding and reducing ambulance conveyance and admissions to hospital and improving patient and carer experience".

Platinum Award for High Quality Highways Network Information

Cambridgeshire County Council's Searches Team have achieved a Platinum Award for the consistent high quality of its highways network information, street, and address data. The award was presented at the annual [GeoPlace conference and awards](#) in May.

[GeoPlace](#) is a partnership organisation between Ordnance Survey and the Local Government Association which produces key national datasets of street and address information which are used across the public and private sector for services ranging from postal and emergency vehicle routing, to road works, planning and insurance, and more.

Cambridgeshire contributes to these national datasets by sending GeoPlace monthly updates from its Local Street Gazetteer (LSG) (part of the [National Street Gazetteer](#)), which is the Council's definitive road maintenance database and is used by a range of different services across the Council. The LSG is under continuous review by the Searches Team in the Highways Maintenance Service, including the insertion of information about new streets, their location and highway status.

Messages

Red Balloon of the Air - Peterborough Student Hub Open Event

Councillor Stephen Ferguson met with Red Balloon of the Air staff, students, and parents at their new hub in Peterborough -The Spinney. This development will really boost options for professionals and families as they consider alternative and accessible provision for the young people of Peterborough currently out of education.

USAF 501st Combat Support Wing Exercising the Freedom of the Town Parade

Following the granting of the Freedom of the Town back in 2018, the USAF 501st Combat Support Wing exercised their Freedom on Friday 19 May 2023, to mark five years of the Freedom. The Chair joined the parade and inspection ceremony.

80th Anniversary Memorial at New Shire Hall

The Chair laid a wreath on the 26 May for the 80th memorial service held at New Shire Hall. The memorial service was attended by Reverend Rob Paddison, Royal Air Force Commander, Squadron Leader Tina Sheeran, and The Commander, 423rd Air Base Group, and Ceremony Host Colonel Valerie Long.

Memorial Day Ceremony at Cambridge American Cemetery

The Chair attended and laid a wreath at Cambridge American Cemetery to commemorate the memory of the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom on behalf of the people of Cambridgeshire.

Her Majesty Queen Camilla at The British Racing School

The Chair was honoured to be invited to be part of the Civic Dignitary line up to welcome Her Majesty at The British Racing School on 1 June.

Civic Service for the Installation of the Mayor at Peterborough Cathedral

The Chair attended Peterborough Cathedral for the Civic Service of the installation of the Mayor, Councillor Nick Sandford.

Armed Forces Day Flag Raising at New Shire Hall

The Chair raised the flag and said a few words at New Shire Hall for Armed Forces Day alongside Dr Stephen Moir, Councillor Gerri Bird, Huntingdon Deputy Mayor Councillor Karl Brockett, and other members of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Pride Month Flag Raising at New Shire Hall

The Chair raised the flag and said a few words at New Shire Hall for Pride Month alongside Dr Stephen Moir and other Cambridgeshire County Council Colleagues.

Midsummer Fair Proclamation

The Chair attended the proclamation of Midsummer Fair and Market on Midsummer Common in Cambridge. The Fair dates back to a Royal Charter granted by King John in 1211.

Conferment of Honorary Degrees in the Senate-House

The Chair attended the Senate-House at a Congregation for the Conferment of Honorary Degrees by The Chancellor, The Lord Sainsbury of Turville.

Civic Leaders Open Day

On behalf of the Chair the Vice Chair, Councillor Gerri Bird attended the Civic Leaders Open Day held at RAF Molesworth.

High Sheriffs Summer Reception

The Chair attended the The High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire Dr Bharatkumar N Khetani's Summer Reception at Elgoods Brewery Visitors Centre and Gardens North Brink in Wisbech.

Congregation for the formal admission to office of Professor Deborah Prentice as the 347th Vice-Chancellor

The Chair and Vice Chair attended the congregation for the formal admission to office of Professor Deborah Prentice as the 347th Vice-Chancellor at the Senate-House on 5 July.

Bishop of Ely Garden Party

The Chair attended The Bishop of Ely, The Rt Reverend Stephen Conway's garden party.

Civic Service West Northamptonshire Council and Reception at the Guildhall Courtyard

The Chair attended the West Northamptonshire Council Civic Service at All Saints' Church in Northampton.

100th Air Refuelling Wing Change of Command at RAF Mildenhall

On behalf of the Chair, the Vice Chair, Cllr Gerri Bird, attended the 100th Air Refuelling Wing Change of Command at RAF Mildenhall where Colonel Gene A Jacobus relinquished command to Colonel Ryan J Garlow.

Public Question Time

Question from Fenland District Councillor Chris Seaton to Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee:

Thank you, Chairman, and good morning members. Can I thank you for allowing me this opportunity to ask this question this morning.

The question is to the Chair of the Highways and Transportation Committee, and the question is: What action will Cambridgeshire County Council take to rectify the appalling state of road-markings (such as single and double yellow lines) and on-street parking restriction signs in Fenland, where a recent report by the County Council's contractor indicated that more than 90% of signs and markings are no longer legally compliant and are therefore not legally enforceable?

Thank you Chair.

Response from Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee:

Thank you very much Councillor Seaton and thank you for coming here to ask your question today. It is something that I'm sure is of great concern to many people across the county.

Obviously, we are all aware of the constrained funding environment of which the County Council exists within. The British Asphalt Association currently reckons that its about £11 billion pounds across the country to put our roads up to the state of repair that we would all like. We have obviously seen 30% inflation within highways over the last year due to the Truss budget and other things, and the Government puts 31 times as much funding into repairing national highways roads as it does into our own.

Obviously, within our own budgets, about 80% of our budget goes into adult social care, children and young peoples, and that leaves us with a very modest revenue budget for highways. We've also seen our highways budget lack the amount of investment it needs over many years over many previous Administrations, and that has led to some very difficult decisions within the Highways department. As part of that, previous Administrations, and ours, have continued to focus on safety as a top priority as to where our budget goes, so therefore that means that we do spend our most resources on making sure safety lines are corrected and repainted. We make sure that any safety-critical potholes are repaired fast. I think everyone will agree that safety needs to be the top priority of this council, so that's where the majority of our investment goes.

As a slight case, the report that you are referring to is regards to school parking enforcement, the 90%. It's not the case that that means that those lines aren't enforceable. They are still currently enforceable by the police in their current state. It is just for us to be able to apply for civil parking enforcement, it requires a higher barrier to entry on that one.

So, we are doing everything we can, but obviously we do live in a very constrained funding environment, and highways has lacked over many decades the funding that it needs for that. Thank you.

Supplementary Question from Fenland District Councillor Chris Seaton:

Obviously, I recognise some of the comments that have been made by Councillor Beckett. My supplementary would be: The police already have parking enforcement very low on their list of priorities. As almost none of the county council on-street parking restriction signs and road markings are legal in Fenland or Huntingdonshire, what little police enforcement there currently is will cease entirely. And by law, is not this the county council's responsibility as the Highways Authority, and also to provide the duty of care to the residents of Cambridgeshire? Thank you.

Response from Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee:

So, across the county we have some issues with the police enforcing our parking restrictions. Within the city of Cambridge, we currently have civil parking enforcement, where we have parking enforcement operatives that will go out and enforce those, and we do see higher levels of enforcement action within Cambridge. Due to the levels seen in Cambridge, many of the other districts have been requesting civil parking enforcement, and we are looking at rolling it out to other areas. South Cambs, for instance, is in the latter stages of civil parking enforcement applications, and they will be rolling that out very soon. Fenland is one of the other areas that is currently investigating civil parking enforcement, and the County Council and the Combined Authority are putting about £150k into helping Fenland with their ambition for civil parking enforcement. That will obviously take the burden off the police and allow parking wardens to be able to actually do the work within Fenland. Where this report comes from is a lot of that work in getting ready for that, and making sure that we can get the parking enforcement we need across the county.

Question from Dr Sara Lightowlers to Councillor Richard Howitt, Chair of Adults and Health Committee:

Good morning everyone. My name is Sara Lightowlers, and I've been a doctor in the NHS for 13 years - I'm now an oncologist and cancer researcher. I also have two children, the older of whom is starting school in Cambridge this September.

But I'm worried for the future for my children. The climate and ecological emergencies threaten our security and meanwhile the UK is becoming a more difficult and less healthy place to live. Our food system is at the centre of three global crises: health, climate, and ecology.

Globally around 1 million cancer deaths per year are due to a poor-quality diet. Cancer Research UK states that healthier diets could prevent 50 new cancer cases per day in the UK. Yet the public are unaware of the extent of the impact of diet and lifestyle factors on cancer risk, with less than half knowing that processed red meat is a direct cause of cancer and that fruit and vegetables are protective. Poor diet starts from an early age - almost a third of primary school aged children eat less than one portion of vegetables per day, predisposing them to health problems in future.

The science is also clear that meat and dairy are major contributors to the climate and ecological emergencies. In the UK, the food system contributes 19% of human made greenhouse gas emissions. The biggest part of this is due to nitrous oxide and methane emissions from livestock. There have been substantial evidence-based recommendations calling for a move away from meat and dairy, with the National Food Strategy concluding that public organisations need to lead the way.

So, councils around the UK are taking action to promote the benefits of healthy plant-based eating and help normalise it. Some councils have committed to ensure that any food and drink provided at council meetings and events will be plant-based. Waltham Forest Council worked with their school catering provider to launch a new eco-friendly and nutritious menu, which has won national awards. Other councils are increasing, improving and promoting the plant-based options on menus at leisure centres, care homes, and cafes in parks and libraries over which they have influence. Oxford City Council is working with local organisations to establish a plant-based free food service, tackling the climate crisis and food poverty in one. It is also working with local farmers to support the production of more local plant-based produce. London boroughs have used social media to promote the health, environmental and cost saving benefits of eating more plant-based meals.

There are many, many ways that, as a local authority, you can encourage, support and enable people to make healthier, more sustainable food choices. So, my question is, what will you do?

Response from Councillor Richard Howitt, Chair of Adults and Health Committee:

Thank you. Good morning Dr Lightowlers. Thank you for your question, and thank you for being an NHS doctor, and for all that you are doing, and all your colleagues.

I am a parent in Cambridge too, and I share all of your worries for the future of my own children. Cambridgeshire County Council fully accepts your argument that the food system is crucial to meeting the challenges of health and of the environment. I am deeply proud of the work of our Public Health team, to improve health outcomes in the county through healthy eating programmes. Work including, with my good colleague Councillor Goodliffe on my right, who is responsible for schools and young people, on infant feeding strategy; the Healthy Start Scheme, which gives promotion to the access to vitamins for poorer families; our Healthy Child Programme, providing advice on healthy eating; our awards scheme and consultancy to support healthy schools; our child weight management services; our Council summer 'Get Activated' campaign; our holiday activities and food programme which includes a nutritional meal each day and increasing awareness of healthy eating; and for adults we offer our integrated Healthy Lifestyles service, which includes healthy eating workshops and 1:1 advice on adopting a healthier diet.

And of course, it's not just public health. With my colleague Councillor Dupré, why in our climate policy we encourage local, sustainable and in-season foods which support de-carbonisation. With my colleague Councillor Sanderson, our trading standards scheme is vigilant about mislabelling of vegan food, an item that was highlighted by the Guardian recently. So, I hope this demonstrates not just what we will do, but what we are doing.

Finally in my time, I acknowledge the number of vegans in Britain has quadrupled in the last five years. There are probably 13,000 people across Cambridgeshire who choose it as their diet, and our Veg Power scheme with 54 schools specifically encourages children to eat vegetables and we specifically work with schools on school food standards recommending that all children have a meat-free day each week. There is more I'm sure, but I hope that shows you our convictions.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Questions under Council Procedure Rule 9.1

Question to the Council's Appointee on the Combined Authority Board –
Councillor Nethsingha

Question from Councillor Sam Hoy:

Thank you. So, this relates to Appendix 4. It was the Combined Authority meeting on the 31st May. So, there was considerable debate before it was resolved to defer this item to a future meeting, and in that debate Councillor Nethsingha expressed dissatisfaction with the deferment, which was forced by a potential veto by Peterborough City Council.

Councillor Nethsingha expressed her support for the tabled Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, even though it specifically called for a number of things. For example, it called for the CPCA to develop and implement 20 minute neighbourhoods; to have demand management for cars through pricing strategies and physical measures; tackling private vehicle use; road space re-allocation; fiscal measures such as parking charges, congestion charges, emissions charges and workplace parking levies to manage demand and generate revenue and to encourage road capacity reduction leading to motor traffic disappearance and promoting alternatives to car ownership.

So, my question is: When did this Council agree to a war on motorists? Why did Councillor Nethsingha support congestion charges in light of the hated congestion charge in Cambridge? Thank you.

Response from Councillor Lucy Nethsingha:

So, I would just like to make it clear that I don't think anybody is declaring war on motorists. I drive. I think probably most of the people in this room drive. I don't think that the Transport and Connectivity Plan which did not come to the Combined Authority had any intention of declaring a war on motorists either. I think it is extremely important that that is made clear, not only to members in this room but also to members of the public.

I do also however think – and I know that this is not agreed with by many members in Fenland – but we are facing a climate crisis, and that we have large parts of the world where it is extremely difficult to go out in the middle of the day at the moment. Where people are dying. I think we need to look at how we are moving people around, particularly in Cambridgeshire where not only is transport one of the biggest contributors to climate change, to our greenhouse gas emissions, but also where our extreme car dependency means that many people, often young people for whom driving is extortionately expensive, but also often older people are trapped in villages where they cannot access healthcare, they cannot access work or education. I think that those facts are really important for us to consider in our transport and connectivity policy and I am not ashamed of taking into account the wider transport policy that we need.

Supplementary question from Councillor Sam Hoy:

Thanks for that clarification. I think we will have to agree to disagree regarding the war on motorists, but it was good to your reasoning was the climate crisis, so that answers the first point. But you didn't answer the second point about why you voted for congestion charging when you know how unpopular it has been in Cambridge.

Response from Councillor Lucy Nethsingha:

I would like to make it clear that I have not voted on anything, because the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan was withdrawn. So, I think that part of the question was not relevant.