

County Council – Minutes

Please note a video recording of the meeting can be viewed on the Council's [YouTube channel](#):

Date: 12 December 2023

Time: 10:30 a.m. – 3:05 p.m.

Present:

Councillors:

Sebastian Kindersley (Chair)

Henry Batchelor

Alex Beckett

Ken Billington

Gerri Bird

Mike Black

Chris Boden

Alex Bulat

Simon Bywater

Steve Count

Piers Coutts

Steve Criswell

Claire Daunton

Doug Dew

Lorna Dupré

Stephen Ferguson

Jan French

Ian Gardener

Nick Gay

Mark Goldsack

Bryony Goodliffe

Neil Gough

John Gowing

Ros Hathorn

Anne Hay

Mark Howell

Richard Howitt

Samantha Hoy

Bill Hunt

Maria 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

Mandy Smith

Simone Taylor

Firouz Thompson

Steve Tierney

Susan van de Ven

Alison Whelan

Graham Wilson

Apologies for Absence:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Ambrose Smith, Michael Atkins, Anna Bradnam, David Connor, Steve Corney, Ryan Fuller, Jonas King and Mac McGuire.

Apologies for absence had also been submitted by Councillor Adela Costello, although they had not been received in sufficient time to be conveyed to the meeting.

175. Election of Vice-Chair

It was moved by Councillor Meschini and seconded by Councillor Nethsingha, that Councillor Dew be elected Vice-Chair of the County Council for the period to the next annual meeting of the Council in 2024.

It was also moved by Councillor Count and seconded by Councillor Goldsack, that Councillor Smith be elected as Vice-Chair of the County Council for the period to the next annual meeting of the Council in 2024.

It was resolved by a majority to:

Appoint Councillor Dew as the Vice-Chair of the County Council to the next annual meeting of the Council in 2024.

Councillor Dew signed the statutory declaration of acceptance of office and thanked the Council for his election.

[Voting pattern: Liberal Democrats, Labour and Independent group members for Councillor Dew; Conservatives for Councillor Smith]

176. Minutes – 17 October 2023 and Motions Log

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The motions log was noted.

177. Chair's Announcements

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

Councillors observed a minute silence in memory of former councillors Roger Henson, Clare Richards, and James Fitch.

178. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

179. Public Question Time

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

180. Petitions

The Chair reported that no petitions had been received.

181. Section 85 Local Government Act 1972 – Recommendation to Extend Six Month Rule

It was proposed by the Chair of Council, seconded by the Vice-Chair of Council and agreed unanimously to:

- (i) Note that Councillor McGuire had not been able to attend meetings of the Council due to ill-health since his attendance at Constitution and Ethics Committee on 20th June 2023;
- (ii) Extend its best wishes to Councillor McGuire; and
- (iii) Approve Councillor McGuire's non-attendance at meetings of the Council due to ill-health up to 12th June 2024 pursuant to Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

182. Constitution and Ethics Committee Recommendations – Proposed Changes to the Constitution

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

It was resolved unanimously by affirmation to:

- a) Approve the changes to the Constitution set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- b) Approve the revised terms of reference of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Board / Integrated Care Partnership, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report; and
- c) Authorise the Monitoring Officer to take all steps necessary or incidental to implement the changes to the Constitution detailed in this report.

183. Audit and Accounts Committee Annual Report 2022-23

The Chair of the Audit and Accounts Committee, Councillor Wilson, moved receipt of the Audit and Accounts Committee Annual Report 2022-23.

The Council noted the content of the report.

184. Pension Fund Committee Annual Report 2022-23

The Chair of the Pension Fund Committee, Councillor Whelan, moved receipt of the Pension Fund Committee Annual Report 2022-23.

The Council noted the content of the report.

185. Local Pension Fund Board Annual Report 2022-23

The Chair of Council moved receipt of the Pension Fund Committee Annual Report 2022-23.

The Council noted the content of the report.

186. Motions Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 10

Five motions had been submitted under Council Procedure Rule 10.

a) Motion from Councillor Mike Black

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Black and seconded by Councillor Van de Ven:

The Council notes that:

- the Government has caused a crisis in adult social care, with chronic underfunding to local authorities.

The Council further notes that on a national level:

- spending on adult social care fell by 12% between 2010/11 and 2018/19.
- the Local Government Association (LGA) has estimated that, over the last decade care costs have increased by £8.5bn but revenue only by £2.4bn.
- in some cases, providers display unacceptable and exploitative behaviour in respect of the quality of their care, their treatment of staff and their commercial practices.
- Age UK estimate that 2.6 million people aged 50 and over have an unmet need for support.
- 165,000 jobs in adult care are unfilled, up 52% from 2020/21.
- poor pay and conditions result in high staff turnover with about 400,000 people leaving jobs in adult social care in 2021/2.
- two thirds of those who have used or had contact with adult social care were dissatisfied with it.

In these challenging financial circumstances, this Council, as the key player in the provision of Cambridgeshire adult social care, is committed to providing the best care for residents possible, and notes that its new policies introduced:

- the real living wage for Adult Social Care Services,
- better training, accreditation and career development opportunities for all care workers,

- a stronger preventative approach to health and social care, enabling people to stay in their own homes for longer which can make a positive difference locally and can be key principles in future adult social care reform nationally.

The Council also notes:

- a charges review in light of the current cost-of-living crisis.
- that the latest user satisfaction survey for Cambridgeshire County Council shows that our local care services have improved in giving people a better quality of life, control over their daily lives and in feeling safe, higher than the national average in each case.

This Council welcomes all efforts within the national conversation to improve prospects for adult social care provision including:

- the East of England LGA's supportive consideration of principles of prevention outlined in the Hewitt Review.
- the report "Support Guaranteed, The Roadmap to a National Care Service" published on 8 June 2023 and the following proposals from the report in particular:
 - creating Citizens' Rights to care.
 - rewarding care staff properly with nationally agreed pay, terms and conditions for care staff.
 - moving the mix of providers towards non-profit and public sector provision.
 - empowering and supporting unpaid carers.
 - flexibility at local level allowing local authorities to commission models of support that are right for their community.
 - introducing further charging reforms with more generous means testing and assistance for those struggling to pay the costs of social care.
- the Spring 2023 policy report 'A More Caring Society,'

The Council therefore asks:

- the Executive Director Adults, Health and Commissioning to ensure that departments make the necessary preparations for this Council to take the initiative locally to take any opportunities offered by changes to government policy, including but not limited to the introduction of a National Care Service, to bring about a drastic improvement in social care provision.

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

[Voting pattern: Liberal Democrats, Labour, Independents and 1 Conservative in favour; 3 Conservatives against; 15 Conservatives abstained]

b) Motion from Councillor Elisa Meschini

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Meschini and seconded by Councillor Goldsack:

The Council notes that:

- Councillors represent their community and it is important they reflect, directly or indirectly, the diversity of their local areas, including representing those with protected characteristics (such as age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, gender, and sexual orientation).
- diversity of characteristics, as well as experience, in representation can improve decision making and scrutiny, especially where local-level decisions can have a disproportionate impact on particular groups, including youth, migrants and refugees, women, and residents from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds.
- actions to improve diversity do not all fall within the direct control of the Council, however a debate on this issue is of public interest and all parties represented in the council, alongside the council's own policy development, can contribute towards working collaboratively for improved representation.

The Council welcomes that:

- all parties involved in the Local Government Association (LGA) have been working towards improving diversity and inclusion in councils across the UK.
- the Co-Operative Party, working with various stakeholders in local government, developed the Diverse Councils Declaration, offering guidance on practical and local-level actions every council can take to improve diversity in representation.
- progress made on diversity and inclusion, which should be acknowledged and celebrated, such as working towards a County of Sanctuary status and developing an action plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- all parties represented on the Council have their own internal processes aiming to improve the diversity of elected representatives in all levels of politics.
- the Council has representation from younger people, people with migrant and refugee background, people with disabilities and more.

The Council expresses concerns that:

- political engagement at the local level is stubbornly low, with less than a handful of divisions having more than 50% turnout in local elections. This demonstrates there is still significant work to be done UK-wide to offer a representative voice and inspire engagement in politics.
- there is a correlation between groups who are underrepresented in the democratic process, from voter turnout to local government consultation participation. Younger people, disabled people, private renters, people not born in

the UK, amongst other groups, have significantly lower levels of engagement with local democratic processes.

- the LGA's yearly national census of local councillors shows the challenges in representation in UK-wide local government. In the most recent census of 2022, the average age is 60 years old (with only 16% aged under 45 years old), 59% of councillors are male, 92% identify as white, 64% had a degree equivalent or higher and 40% were retired, which generally does not reflect the composition of the UK population.

The Council is recommended to ask the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Policy and Service Committee, which has delegated authority for oversight, operation and review of the Council's response to its equalities' duties, to consider the Council's response to the Diverse Councils Declaration to increase diversity in our local government, including the following nine objectives within it:

- provide a clear public commitment to improving diversity in democracy, continuing the excellent work on our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy and action plan.
- demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all, promoting the highest standards of behaviour and conduct.
- set out a local Diverse Council action plan, ahead of the next local elections. This can include, but not be limited to, collecting data on the diversity of elected members, exploring the possibility of mentoring or shadowing programmes.
- work towards the standards for member support and development as set out in the LGA Councillor Development Charter and/or Charter Plus.
- demonstrate a commitment to a duty of care for councillors.
- provide flexibility in council business by regularly reviewing and staggering meeting times, whilst ensuring the need for council business to be quorate.
- ensure that all members take up the allowances and salaries to which they are entitled, particularly any reimbursement for costs of care.
- ensure the council's adopted leave policy is accessible, setting out members' entitlement to sick, maternity, paternity, shared parental and adoption leave and relevant allowances.
- provide opportunities for councillors from under-represented groups to be appointed or elected to high profile or senior roles and explore all opportunities for providing support to enable a diverse, skilled and locally representative leadership team in the Council.

The following alteration to the motion was made by Councillor Meschini with the consent of Councillor Goldsack and the meeting (removal in strikethrough, addition in bold):

The Council notes that:

- Councillors represent their community and it is important they reflect, directly or indirectly, the diversity of their local areas, including representing those with protected characteristics (such as age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, gender, ~~and~~ sexual orientation **and care leaver**).
- diversity of characteristics, as well as experience, in representation can improve decision making and scrutiny, especially where local-level decisions can have a disproportionate impact on particular groups, including youth, migrants and refugees, women, and residents from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds.
- actions to improve diversity do not all fall within the direct control of the Council, however a debate on this issue is of public interest and all parties represented in the council, alongside the council's own policy development, can contribute towards working collaboratively for improved representation.

The Council welcomes that:

- all parties involved in the Local Government Association (LGA) have been working towards improving diversity and inclusion in councils across the UK.
- the Co-Operative Party, working with various stakeholders in local government, developed the Diverse Councils Declaration, offering guidance on practical and local-level actions every council can take to improve diversity in representation.
- progress made on diversity and inclusion, which should be acknowledged and celebrated, such as working towards a County of Sanctuary status and developing an action plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- all parties represented on the Council have their own internal processes aiming to improve the diversity of elected representatives in all levels of politics.
- the Council has representation from younger people, people with migrant and refugee background, people with disabilities and more.

The Council expresses concerns that:

- political engagement at the local level is stubbornly low, with less than a handful of divisions having more than 50% turnout in local elections. This demonstrates there is still significant work to be done UK-wide to offer a representative voice and inspire engagement in politics.
- there is a correlation between groups who are underrepresented in the democratic process, from voter turnout to local government consultation participation. Younger people, disabled people, private renters, people not born in the UK, amongst other groups, have significantly lower levels of engagement with local democratic processes.

- the LGA's yearly national census of local councillors shows the challenges in representation in UK-wide local government. In the most recent census of 2022, the average age is 60 years old (with only 16% aged under 45 years old), 59% of councillors are male, 92% identify as white, 64% had a degree equivalent or higher and 40% were retired, which generally does not reflect the composition of the UK population.

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- work towards the standards for member support and development as set out in the LGA Councillor Development Charter and/or Charter Plus.
- demonstrate a commitment to a duty of care for councillors.
- provide flexibility in council business by regularly reviewing and staggering meeting times, whilst ensuring the need for council business to be quorate.
- ensure that all members take up the allowances and salaries to which they are entitled, particularly any reimbursement for costs of care.
- ensure the council's adopted leave policy is accessible, setting out members' entitlement to sick, maternity, paternity, shared parental and adoption leave and relevant allowances.
- provide opportunities for councillors from under-represented groups to be appointed or elected to high profile or senior roles and explore all opportunities for providing support to enable a diverse, skilled and locally representative leadership team in the Council.

Following discussion, and on being put to the vote, the altered motion was carried unanimously.

c) Motion from Councillor Alex Bulat

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

The Council notes that:

- access to NHS dentists has been declining rapidly across the UK.
- many dental care issues experienced by our residents could have been addressed if more focus and funding was put on prevention.
- there is recognition across the political divides in Cambridgeshire that the level of access our residents, including children, can get to NHS dentists falls short of what is acceptable in one of the wealthiest economies.

The Council welcomes that:

- the cross-party Health and Social Care Committee report on NHS dentistry from July 2023 concludes that NHS dentistry faces a “crisis of access” and calls on Government to “undertake urgent and fundamental reform”.
- our council has been already active in calling for better dental care access for our residents, including through the work of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee and Adults and Health Committee and through our health scrutiny function.
- cross-party working on its health scrutiny function, including scrutinising dental access.

The Council expresses concerns that:

- many of its residents, including children, suffer poor oral health, which has implications for their physical health and consequently puts further pressures on secondary care in our county. 18% of 5 year olds in Cambridgeshire have visually obvious dental decay.
- when using the NHS Find a Dentist website, most postcodes in the East of England are unable to find a local available surgery. In 2022, Cambridgeshire, alongside Suffolk and Norfolk, had no dentists registering new patients. This reflects the survey findings of the Health and Social Care Committee in Parliament showing 90% of practices across the UK were not accepting new adult NHS patients.
- there are significant staff shortages in this area, with more than 2000 dentists quitting their role in 2021. This shortage is exacerbated by the lack of a dental school in the East of England region, the fact that the number of EU-trained dentists halved since Brexit and asylum seekers who are qualified as dentists are prevented from having the right to work.

The Council is recommended to commit to:

- working closely with our Integrated Care Boards (ICB), who have a new responsibility to commission NHS dentistry, to improve local services in Cambridgeshire and address the inequalities of access in dental care.
- working with the "Toothless in England" resident campaign group, who have members across Cambridgeshire including a local branch in Huntingdon, to bring local lived experiences in any discussion around dental health in our county.

- continue to working with Cambridgeshire schools to promote education on oral health where possible, focusing on prevention targeting children and young people.
- encourage the ICB to explore the feasibility of mobile dentistry in our county, especially in areas which are less served by public transport.
- call on government for reform including the Units of Dental Activity (UDA) contracts which are pushing NHS dentists into private practice.

Following discussion, the motion was carried unanimously by affirmation.

d) Motion from Councillor Bill Hunt

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Hunt and seconded by Councillor Count.

Core purpose: To improve the Council's policy on consultations to be more inclusive and impartial, by attempting to consult all who are affected, in an impartial consultation, rather than simply satisfying the legal minimum requirements.

The Council notes that:

- there appears to have been much confusion over consultations recently, with some consultations only reaching some residents who would be affected by the proposals.
- the "Cambridge Congestion Charge" which has a huge potential impact upon residents from Fenland, Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire has had no or minimal consultation outside of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire. Despite the limited consultation having been undertaken by the Greater Cambridge Partnership, it was expected to be relied upon for decision making at Cambridgeshire County Council. Many people have in effect been disenfranchised by this.
- there has been a consultation undertaken on a proposed Ely City wide 20mph limit. Residents from Ely's surrounding villages will be more affected than Ely residents and yet only some city residents have been consulted.
- it is only right that all people who are potentially affected by major changes in their lives must be properly consulted. All residents who could potentially be affected by rule changes should be consulted and not just local residents.
- it should not be assumed that all residents have computer availability.

Council therefore asks the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Policy and Service Committee to consider revisions to its Engagement and Consultation Strategy to fully include all of those who can reasonably be expected to be affected, in an impartial manner.

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

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

d) Motion from Councillor Neil Shailer

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Shailer and seconded by Councillor Murphy:

The Council notes that:

- flexible working is no longer just a 'nice-to-have'. It's good for people and good for business—boosting productivity, employee engagement, and staff retention.
- councils play a leading role in showcasing positive employment practice through their own actions.
- flexible Working has received cross party support with the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Bill being supported by both the Government and opposition parties.

The Council welcomes that:

- many top UK employers, including Cambridgeshire businesses, agree that offering flexibility at the point of recruitment is essential.
- the Civil Service is a proud adopter of Working Families' 'Happy to Talk Flexible Working' logo.
- our Council is progressing its action plan on Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) which is essential when considering work patterns and flexible working.

The Council expresses concern that:

- Office for National Statistics (ONS) data show that during the last financial year the number of people leaving the UK workforce due to caring responsibilities rose for the first time in four decades.
- the 2023 Working Families Index found that over half of UK parents on lower incomes have had to reduce their working hours in order to manage their childcare needs, while four in ten had gone into debt to pay for childcare. The rising cost of childcare, childcare provision availability and the cost of living have contributed to these patterns.
- polling from Working Families that found 8 in 10 UK parents (82%) would be likely to apply for a job that lists flexible working options, while only 3 in 10 parents (31%) would be likely to apply for a job that does not list flexible working options.

This Council is recommended to commit to:

- use available opportunities to highlight best practice including that of the Council, with local employers, to promote the benefits of flexible working arrangements for both employers and employees.

- write to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to ask the Business Board to encourage local employers to create more flexible working opportunities by advertising jobs as flexible, unless there are solid business reasons not to.
- use the 'Happy to Talk Flexible Working' logo and strapline on the Council's job vacancy portal which also lists the type of flexible working options on offer including the right to request flexible working from day one of employment.
- encourage recruiting managers to reference the flexibility that each role can offer when advertising council jobs as flexible, unless there are solid business reasons not to.

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

[Voting pattern: Liberal Democrats, Labour, Independents and 13 Conservatives in favour; 1 Conservative against; 1 Conservative abstained]

187. Questions

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

Five questions were 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

County Council – 12th December 2023

Chair's Announcements

People

Former County Councillor Roger Henson

It is with regret that the Chair reports the recent death of former County Councillor Roger Henson, who represented the Norman Cross Division on behalf of UKIP from 2013 to 2017. The Council's thoughts are with his family and friends at this very sad time.

Former County Councillor Claire Richards

It is with regret that the Chair reports the recent death of former County Councillor Claire Richards, who represented the Castle Division on behalf of Labour from 2017 to 2021. The Council's thoughts are with her family and friends at this very sad time.

Former County Councillor James Fitch

It is with regret that the Chair reports the death of former County Councillor James Fitch, who represented the Burwell Division on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group from 1985 to 1989 and 1993 to 2005. The Council's thoughts are with his family and friends at this very sad time.

Christine Birchall, Head of Communications and Information

Christine Birchall, Head of Communications and Information retires on 15th January 2024. The Council thanks her for her untiring work for the council since she joined in February 2017. Her work during the Covid pandemic was noteworthy as she and her team worked to support the Council's communities through this most difficult time. The high quality of this work was commended by the Cabinet Office and recommended as a model for others to follow.

The Council wishes Christine all the best in her retirement. Her enthusiasm, commitment and her drive will be sorely missed.

Awards

Children in Care Council

The Children in Care Council work on their Every Word Matters project has been recognised with A National Voice Award from the national Children in Care Council.

Their animated video of a discussion led by a Care Leaver is this year's Digital Award winner. Every Word Matters (available on [YouTube](#)) highlights how the words we use can make children and young people feel, and how important it is that we talk to them about the words we use with them.

The Children in Care Council, supported by the Participation Team, are active in creating change to improve the way services work with Children in Care, with many of their projects having relevance to all of us working with children and young people.

Swaffham Prior Renewable Heat Network

Swaffham Prior Renewable Heat Network, the UK's first retrofitted village heat network, has won the prestigious Edie Net Zero Award for Renewable Energy Project of the Year. A community-led project delivered by Cambridgeshire County Council working in partnership with the Swaffham Prior Community Land Trust, Government and Bouygues Energies and Services Ltd. The Edie Awards – formerly known as the Sustainability Leaders Awards – are the world's largest sustainable business awards and recognise green projects which are transforming the energy landscape for good. This innovative project will enable villagers to ditch their oil tanks and storage heaters and switch to a clean renewable heat network using ground and air source heat pumps installed at the newly created energy centre.

The 5% Club's 2023-24 Employer Audit Scheme

Cambridgeshire has become the first County Council to be awarded 'Silver' membership of The 5% Club's 2023-24 Employer Audit Scheme. This award recognises the Council's significant contribution to the continued development of all its employees through "earn and learn" schemes such as Apprenticeships, Graduate Development Programmes and Sponsored Student Course Placements. With a workforce of around 4,600 people and with many roles in areas where there are national skills shortages – such as social care staff and engineering – the council continues to explore all opportunities to attract a committed and skilled workforce to deliver its vision to build a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire.

Cambridgeshire Youth Justice Service

Congratulations to the Cambridgeshire Youth Justice Service, which has been rated as 'good' overall by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. The inspection found a highly motivated team of staff who were skilled and knowledgeable, and a service committed to learning and development.

Interim Chief Inspector of Probation Sue McAllister said: "Overall, Cambridgeshire Youth Justice Service is performing well, and it is highly regarded by its partners. We found children benefit from a wide range of services including access to a psychologist. We are confident the service is committed to using our recommendations to assist it in achieving its high ambitions for youth justice delivery in Cambridgeshire."

University of the Year 2023 – Anglia Ruskin University

Anglia Ruskin University was named the Times Higher Education University of the Year 2023 on 7 December 2023.

The Times Higher Education Awards are known as the Oscars of UK Higher Education, and the University of the Year award is the highest profile prize in the sector. Other universities shortlisted for the award this year included the University of Exeter, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and University of York.

In addition to winning the University of the Year 2023 award, it was also shortlisted in the categories of Outstanding Contribution to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, for the excellent

[Students at the Heart of Knowledge Exchange](#) scheme, and Outstanding Contribution to the Local Community, for [ARU Peterborough](#).

Service Developments

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

The Overarching Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for 2023 has just been published on Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Insight (<https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/jsna-2023/>). It provides a wealth of data and information on the population and health of our local area through a new interactive format. This JSNA reflects on the changes in our population over the last 10 years and looks forward to the next 10 years, as well as presenting data on life expectancy, health, mortality and much more. This new interactive resource allows users to compare Cambridgeshire and the districts to other similar areas across England, as well as providing more local ward level data where possible.

Messages

Veteran's Day at the American Cemetery in Madingley

The Chair attended the Veteran's Day Service at Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial in Madingley, Cambridge and laid a wreath at the memorial, alongside other dignitaries.

Remembrance Service at New Shire Hall

Councillor Stephen Ferguson led a Remembrance Service at New Shire Hall, His Majesty's Vice Lord-Lieutenant Brigadier Tim Seal attended along with Lord-Lieutenant Cadet Beth Sharp. Alconbury Church of England Primary School provided the musical accompaniment with their Year 6 Choir. Councillors, members of the Royal British Legion and colleagues from the council were in attendance.

Armistice Day Service and Thinking Soldier Centenary Commemoration

The Chair laid a wreath at the Huntingdon War Memorial as part of the Armistice Service. This year marked the centenary of the unveiling of the Thinking Soldier war memorial, which the Huntingdon branch of the Women's Institute raised money for after the end of the First World War, while the council contributed for the cost of the base.

Olive Alternative Provision Academy in Cambridge

The Chair was joined by Councillor Bryony Goodliffe to see the excellent work being undertaken at Olive Alternative Provision Academy in Cambridge.

British Empire Medal (BEM) Investiture at Great St Mary's Church, Cambridge

The Chair attended the BEM Investiture for Mrs Patricia Covington, who has worked tirelessly to improve life in the village of Steeple Morden, particularly in her role as postmistress for 35 years, as well as an extremely active member of the Royal British Legion.

Cambridgeshire Academy for Reaching Excellence (CARE)

The Chair opened proceedings at the CARE launch at New Shire Hall, the Cambridgeshire Academy for Reaching Excellence.

Steel signing at Kennet Primary School

The Chair attended a Steel signing event at Kennet Primary School which marked an important milestone in the construction of the new school building, which the school plan to move into in 2024.

White Ribbon Flag Raising at New Shire Hall

The Chair raised the White Ribbon Flag and said a few words at New Shire Hall alongside Councillor Stephen Ferguson, the Executive Director of Strategy and Partnerships and other Cambridgeshire County Council colleagues. White Ribbon is a UK charity which aims to end male violence against women and girls, and Cambridgeshire County Council has received White Ribbon Accreditation for the work it does around addressing male violence. The theme for this year is #ChangeTheStory to recognise that culture change doesn't happen overnight.

Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal opened the New Huntingdon Fire Station and Service Training Centre

The Chair was part of the dignitary line up on the 29th November when Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal opened the New Huntingdon Fire Station and Service Training Centre.

Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal opened the North Cambridgeshire Training Centre (NCTC) in Chatteris

The Chair attended the opening of the NCTC, North Cambridgeshire Training Centre in Chatteris by Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal.

St Andrew's Flag Raising at New Shire Hall

The Chair raised the St Andrew's Flag at New Shire Hall, accompanied by Deputy Lieutenant Mr Daryl Brown MBE.

King's College Carol Service

The Chair took part in the King's College Carol Service for Secondary Schools by reading the Fifth Lesson at King's College Chapel.

Fenland District Council Chairman's Carol Service

The Chair attended the Fenland District Council Chairman's Carol Service at St Peter & St Paul Parish Church, Wisbech.

Public Question Time

1. Question from Lewis Herbert to the Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee, Councillor Beckett:

My question is to Councillor Beckett, the Chair of the Highways Committee. Can the Council advise how effectively and quickly it will tackle broken roads and properly fill potholes in Cambridge and market towns, heavily used by local cyclists, motor bikers and vulnerable pedestrians, and improve the safety of local people and reduce the number of accidents caused by damaged roads last winter?

Response from the Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee:

Thank you and thank you, Lewis. It's good to see you back in the Council Chamber. I'm very sorry to hear about the cycle accident you had last year as well. It's something which affects all of us. Personally, my wife actually hit a pothole, not on one of our roads, and lost her front tooth due to it, so I know the very serious effects that potholes can have particularly on Active Travel users.

Something this administration has been very keen on is recognising that fact, so we do have a paper coming to the next Highways and Transport Committee looking at maintenance of Active Travel routes. One of the things we are looking at doing is building an Active Travel hierarchy, which looks at how we can make sure that we are deploying resources to fix potholes where they have the biggest safety impact, and recognising that cycle desire lines can often have a very different impact compared to road users. That is work that is ongoing and you look forward to that coming forward.

This Council is also putting forward one of the biggest investments in highways maintenance that we have seen for a very long time. We have recognised that there has been decades of under investment in highways maintenance and that has seen a lot of the poor standards that we currently have on our roads. It is clear to me that we do need a significant amount of investment in that. So I look forward to that coming forward and seeing what a difference that we can make to our residents to help improve the state of their roads across the County.

Supplementary question from Lewis Herbert

Thanking Councillor Beckett. Following the recent dreadful death in Lancashire of a 94 year cyclist who hit a long standing rut, the local highways inspector said at the inquest in October, and I quote "They had been instructed to focus on holes posing a risk to four wheeled vehicles".

What assurance can Councillor Beckett give to Cambridgeshire cyclists, bikers, pedestrians that the Council and all Highways Department Inspectors will at all times give totally equal safety focus to all users, and see the small ruts, as well as the big potholes, and not only be fixated on the needs of car drivers.

Response from the Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee

I totally agree with you there, Councillor Herbert. I actually raised that exact point with Lancashire at a previous full Council meeting. Although just to correct my own mistake, I think I referred to it as Lanarkshire rather than Lancashire, so I apologise for that one.

It is something that we take incredibly seriously, we have previously seen our maintenance hierarchy be focused on those on four wheels and not necessarily understand the impact that it can have different types of defects on those on two wheels. That's as I mentioned earlier one of the big pieces of work we are doing now, looking at our intervention criteria and how they can apply to cycle desire lines and pedestrians.

Pedestrians already have a different intervention criteria on our footways and we also apply those intervention criteria around pedestrian crossings but there is a lot of work to be done around cyclists and that is a piece of work we have had ongoing for a while and will be coming forward early next year to look at how we can improve those things. It's not just potholes, it's gritting as well and all sorts of other things. Maintenance can have a disproportionate effect on those on two wheels where they are far more exposed but we do look at a very safety based system and we are looking at trying to improve safety and are committed to Vision Zero across the county to reduce deaths on all of our roads where possible.

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 is on Appendices 11, Agenda Item 7. Why is the Leader of this Council so keen to maintain secrecy about Dr Nik, as the Mayor, being found guilty of having done some things, sorry I have written this terribly, especially details of his proven condoning of the actions of the person referred to as "henchman". As the secrecy only is helping the guilty party side and the victims are being denied any voice or recognition so why are you so keen to maintain secrecy, thank you?

Response from Councillor Lucy Nethsingha:

So I'm not particularly in favour of maintaining any particular secrecy around this and I don't actually think there is any secrecy about it. There's been a report published, there was a thorough investigation undertaken by an independent person, and a well – undertaken and then scrutinised by an independent person, that process was then looked into at some length by the Audit and Governance Committee of the Combined Authority, which is a committee that consists of members from all political parties, and is chaired I believe by an independent person. The report from that was published. There has been a code of conduct report, the report of the independent person is on the website of the Combined Authority. We spent over an hour discussing this, probably several hours discussing this, which I will never get back from my life, discussing this at the Combined Authority Board meeting. So I don't think there is any secrecy around it.

There is a need to protect members of staff at the Combined Authority past and present not the "henchman" who you're talking about but other members of staff. Therefore the entire details of what occurred are not in the public domain because it would be entirely inappropriate for that to happen not because of anything to do with the Mayor but to do with members of staff at the Combined Authority, but I do think there is an enormous amount of misinformation circulating around in certain areas about what that code of conduct complaint judged about the Mayor and given this opportunity I'm just going to read you one of the concluding paragraphs from that complaint. "The Independent Investigator did not consider that the failings of the Mayor damaged the reputation of the Combined Authority, the Independent Investigator's findings were serious but the Mayor did not directly act in a disrespectful manner to employees or to others, nor did he directly bully, the disrepute he inflicted was on upon himself in his role as Mayor, the political leader of the Combined Authority due to his lack of leadership" so that's what he's been accused of, he was not accused, not found guilty of bullying.

Question from Councillor Anne Hay:

Thank you Chair, I also want to refer to Appendix 11, this time item 18a. Why in the Bus Strategy Update is there no recognition that bus services in the north of the county have deteriorated far more than in Cambridge City. A couple of weeks ago Friends of the Earth published a report showing reductions in bus services across the country since 2006/2008. Of the 349 councils listed, the second worst reduction is in Fenland. Fenland now has only 16.2% of the services we had sixteen years ago, the second worst in the country out of 349 councils. Cambridge City by

contrast is one of the councils which has suffered the least cuts in bus services in the country. Cambridge City still has 64.1% of the services it had sixteen years ago compared with Fenland 16.2. Shouldn't the CPCA support for bus services be guided by need rather than allocating a disproportionate amount of support to bus services in Cambridge City.

Response from Councillor Lucy Nethsingha:

Thank you, I'm happy to answer this question. So I think that the Bus Strategy and the work which has been done at the Combined Authority on improving bus services across Cambridgeshire is really impressive, I'm really pleased by the amount of effort that is going into that. I think the decision, there was quite a risky decision by the Mayor a year and a bit ago to save several commercial services, which were under threat, many of which were in Fenland in fact, but in many other parts of the county. It was not an easy or a safe decision to do that because then if it is not possible to keep those service going then the Combined Authority is the one to blame for pulling them rather than it being the commercial operators. A huge amount of work has gone on at the Combined Authority to make sure that all of those services are still running, and more work is going on in continuing to look at and attempt to increase the level of our bus service.

On the particular question about comparing bus services in Fenland versus bus services in Cambridge, I think this is absolutely a question of comparing apples and pears. I think a lot of the responsibility for the fact that bus services in our rural areas have deteriorated sits entirely with the Conservative administration when they were in control, they made decisions to reduce bus subsidy across the whole of Cambridgeshire, year after year after year, and I remember sitting here and opposing those bus cuts year after year after year. What we have are services in places where there is high population density, that is what happens in Cambridge, it is also what happens in Huntingdon, in Peterborough, the areas where there is high population density is where it is possible to run a commercial service. In rural areas, it is not possible to run a commercial service and therefore there is a need for subsidy and at the Combined Authority we are working really hard to provide that. Interestingly enough the Cambridge congestion charge proposals were also all about that, that was what they were trying to do. They were bitterly opposed by members on the opposite side of the chamber....

Supplementary question from Councillor Anne Hay:

I could not believe it when Councillor Nethsingha commended the Combined Authority on the work they have done on the bus services. This has been going on for over four years ago they started a review of bus services, and yes, they have saved a few routes but they are still no further along the road of actually telling us what they are actually going to do to improve stuff other than put up the Mayor's precept, it would seem so I'm totally disappointed with the work of the CPCA and our representatives on it.

Response from Councillor Lucy Nethsingha:

Well, just that four years ago the Mayor was James Palmer and if you are disappointed with him, I'm absolutely with you every step of the way. He did nothing on bus services for four years. The work that's been done since is very impressive. Actually, the work on franchising is progressing in a good way, we have the audit on franchising has moved ahead, there will be decisions this winter. The pace of change since Mayor Palmer was voted out of office has been quite extraordinarily different but it does take time and that's because the legal framework bequeathed us by Mrs Thatcher and her government makes running, trying to change the way in which bus services are run very, very difficult but we are making good progress. Thank you.

Question from Councillor Steve Tierney:

Thank you Chair, I would like to go back to item 7, if I may, and the breach of the code of conduct by Mayor Nik Johnson. I think it was fair what Councillor Nethsingha said that there's misinformation out there but of course how can we know? Because I discovered yesterday that only a summary report was made public and maybe that wouldn't matter if this just a matter of shenanigans between councillors or in a meeting but one of the things I was made aware of is that as part of this matter a young autistic women had to be provided with a personal alarm by the CPCA because she had fears for her safety. Now that's now a matter of public knowledge that piece of information and that really worries me because we don't know what happens there, we don't know what that means. All we know is that a young autistic woman had to be provided with a personal alarm by the CPCA because she was frightened.

Chair:

Councillor Tierney, I think rehearsal of those comments regardless of whether or not they are in the public domain elsewhere is not suitable here so if you could get to your question that would be great, in very general terms please.

Question from Councillor Steve Tierney:

I'm unsure what rule I broke Chairman but okay if you say so. I find it difficult to reconcile that a report of such gravity should be secret and Councillor Nethsingha I'd just ask as our representation there that you join me and the Conservatives in calling for the full report to be made public. Now I understand what you said about the victims, I would be happy with the full report with the victims named redacted but the information should be out there if only to protect Dr Nik. If he's not done anything wrong, as you seem to be saying or the things people are suggesting then the full report will make that available to us won't it but we don't know why that happened and lots of people are really worried about that. It's not just a joke, I was horrified to hear you all laughing a minute ago, this is not a funny matter, is it? Please would you come with us and just suggest that the full report be made public so we can all know what the hell is going on. Thank you.

Response from Councillor Lucy Nethsingha:

Thank you. I think it is really important that we are clear about what is misinformation and what should not be discussed. So the information which is in the public domain is very clear. Nik Johnson was not accused of bullying, was not found guilty of bullying. It was made very clear in the Board meeting that none of those types of allegations about people feeling unsafe were found in the report relating to him and that the independent, and the criticisms of him which I have quoted in the paper before were about failure of leadership. That is what he was found guilty of. Failure of leadership within that organisation. Now there are many other, as I've said, there is a lot of misinformation out there and I think having things like what you have just quoted in this meeting, quoted in this meeting, doesn't help with that misinformation. Information like that which relates to concerns by members of staff within the Combined Authority may or may not be relating, it's not clear who it's relating to, and making allegations and implications about where that comes from is really unhelpful. So I think we have to stick with what is in the public domain, and what is in the public domain is very clear that while Nik Johnson was found guilty of lack of leadership, he was not found guilty of any kind of bullying. We need to be really clear about that.

Supplementary question from Councillor Steve Tierney:

Thank you Chairman, everything I have said is in the public domain and the questions I asked had no allegations. I asked a question and it was of course not answered. Now I will just try and follow it up a little bit because I'm . There is a term that's in the report which you would have seen that says "henchman". The nature of the word "henchman" is somebody who is working on behalf of someone else, and as we know the code of conduct did find that Dr Nik showed a lack of leadership. Now people make connections with that, I'm not making the connection, the connection is plainly obvious, and we would know the answer, there'd be no misinformation, you wouldn't be able to throw that silly word around, if the full report was published because then we would know the truth. This Council is supposed to be the transparency council. Why are we hiding the report? Redact the names and put it out there, let us know what happened. People want to know, this is not a trivial issue, it's a serious issue. Please support me – thank you.

Response from Councillor Lucy Nethsingha:

I think my comment is to encourage as many people as possible to read the report because the report is very clear, it's been very well set out, and it does not overstep the legal mark. The word "henchman" is in that report but it's very much in inverted commas and it refers to that word having been used by somebody else so I think that I just would encourage every member here and anybody who is interested in this to read the report because that is where you will get the most clarity on these issues not necessarily by reading twitter.

Question from Councillor Steve Count:

Thank you Chair. Same appendix number but this is on the financial strategy. In terms of the buses, I think in terms of finance we all recognise you get your money from somewhere and part of somewhere will be the precept which he is planning to put up from £12, which didn't exist the year before, up to £36 – 200% increase, and he claims it's to use to subsidise the buses. Now at the end of the day the money goes in the pot, money spends for various things, and I want to quote something else the Combined Authority is spending their money on. "To help with the cost of living crisis, it is proposed that significant part of the revenue headroom in the Medium Term Financial Plan £3.85m along with £550k of the bus service improvement plan money allocation mentioned above be used to reduce the single fares for those under 25 travelling on buses within the region". So effectively the same amount of money or similar amount of money as the Mayor is raising is not being used on subsidising buses but in fact subsidising those under 25 year olds. Can I ask Lucy Nethsingha, through you chair, if she understands that whether that is in fact the correct situation which I'm reading from.

Response from Councillor Lucy Nethsingha:

I can't be very precise about whether it's the correct information but I think if it were, I'm perfectly happy to accept that it is if you are reading it out. I think that subsidising transport for under 25 year olds in this county is a really valuable thing to do. I think that making sure our young people are able to access education and employment is something that we should all be working to make happen. The lack of access to education and employment for young people, particularly from rural areas but also who live away from the areas of key employment has a huge impact on their potential earnings and their potential careers, and I am very supportive of anything that makes it easier for young people from across the county to access better education and employment. So I don't have any shame in thinking that's a good way of spending any money.

Supplementary question from Councillor Steve Count:

So we have heard from Councillor Nethsingha that the vast majority of services are those in urban areas and those in rural areas are vastly missed out due to historic reasons. This means that the vast amount of people under 25 years old will probably be located in or near Cambridge City. So I have residents paying £36 a year in Christchurch, I have residents paying £36 a year in Turves for no bus service at all but they are supposed to subsidise someone who might be 22 or 23 years old on a Saturday night to go out into the town to have a drink when they can get a bus back past midnight because it will help with their cost of living crisis. This is an ill thought through policy, this really is and it favours, it absolutely favours Cambridge City and centric thinking.

Response from Councillor Lucy Nethsingha:

So I'm really shocked to hear Councillor Count opposing something that would improve access for young people to education and employment across the county. I do recognise that we need to increase the number of bus services and that this will help people who live in areas where there are bus services but there are bus services in much more of the county than just Cambridge City, and I think for him to be painting this as something that's just going to allow – it's such an appalling way to talk about the young people in our county. To think that this is a waste of money because it might allow them to socialise on a Saturday night when actually so much is also about giving them access maybe to get a job, but maybe to get a job that works late nights in Cambridge, maybe to get a job that works late nights in Ely or in Cottenham or any other pub across the county where actually there are a lot of people who can't get those kinds of roles because they cannot drive home in the evening. I just want to remind everyone in this chamber that even in Fenland where the bus service is indeed not very good, there's a very significant proportion, I think it is about 15% of households who have no access to a car. It might even be higher than that. Those are people who at present are locked out from many of the opportunities in our county, and I think making sure they have access by better public transport, and this is a step on that road is really important.

Question from Councillor Chris Boden:

Thank you. I wonder if the Leader would care to just correct what she said earlier on the subject of Nik Johnson and the conduct charge. I am going to be very strict in sticking to what was published in the CPCA report particularly paragraphs 7.30 and 7.33 for anyone who wants to look it up. In those paragraphs it was made clear that the investigator found that the Mayor had done much more than just had a failure of leadership, as we're told, but that he had condoned unacceptable behaviour and the investigator said, that actual word was given here, that the Mayor's denial of that was implausible. Now that was what was actually in the report which was in front of us in the CPCA Board and I think that saying it was merely a failure of leadership is just giving protection to the Mayor, protection to the perpetrators of the behaviour which took place and is denying the right of the victims, and to say that this is being kept secret because of the victims of the behaviour which took place is completely false. The victims actually want the publicity, they want it to be clear what happened because their voices have been absolutely silenced.

The Chair asked the Leader of the Council to provide a written response as this section of the Council agenda had exceeded the time allotted in the Constitution.