

# County Council – Minutes

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

Date: 13 February 2024

Time: 10:30 a.m. – 3:32 p.m.

## Present:

### Councillors:

Sebastian Kindersley (Chair)

Doug Dew (Vice-Chair)

David Ambrose Smith

Michael Atkins

Henry Batchelor

Alex Beckett

Ken Billington

Gerri Bird

Mike Black

Chris Boden

Anna Bradnam

Alex Bulat

Simon Bywater

David Connor

Steve Corney

Adela Costello

Steve Count

Piers Coutts

Claire Daunton

Lorna Dupré

Stephen Ferguson

Ian Gardener

Nick Gay

Mark Goldsack

Bryony Goodliffe

Neil Gough

John Gowing

Ros Hathorn

Anne Hay

Mark Howell

Richard Howitt

Bill Hunt

Jonas King

Maria King

Simon King

Peter McDonald

Elisa Meschini

Brian Milnes

Edna Murphy

Lucy Nethsingha

Keith Prentice

Catherine Rae

Kevin Reynolds

Tom Sanderson

Geoffrey Seeff

Neil Shailer

Alan Sharp

Philippa Slatter

Simone Taylor

Firouz Thompson

Alison Whelan

Graham Wilson

## Apologies for Absence:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Steve Criswell, Jan French, Ryan Fuller, Sam Hoy, Mark Howell, Josh Schumann, Mandy Smith, Steve Tierney and Susan van de Ven.

## 188. Minutes – 12 December 2023 and Motions Log

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The motions log was noted.

## 189. Chair's Announcements

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

Councillors observed a minute silence in memory of Councillor Mac McGuire, former Chief Executive of the Council, John Barratt, and the first Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Sir Graham Bright.

## 190. Appointment of Honorary Alderman

It was moved by the Chair of Council, Councillor Kindersley, seconded by the Vice-Chair of Council, Councillor Dew, and resolved unanimously to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on the late County Councillor Mac McGuire.

## 191. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reported that the Monitoring Officer had exercised her discretion to grant a dispensation to all elected members of the Council taking part in the debate and vote on Agenda Item 8 (Independent Remuneration Panel – Review of Indexation of Members' Allowances).

There were no other declarations of interest.

## 192. Public Question Time

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

## 193. Petitions

The Chair reported that no petitions had been received.

## 194. Proposed Business Plan for 2024-29

It was moved by the Chair of the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee, Councillor Nethsingha, seconded by the Vice-Chair of the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee, Councillor Meschini, that the recommendations from the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee, as set out on pages 33 and 34 of the Council agenda, be approved.

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

The Chair then invited amendments to the overall budget proposal.

Councillor Nethsingha moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Meschini, as set out in Appendix B.

Following discussion, the amendment upon being put to the vote was carried.

[Voting pattern: Liberal Democrats, Independents and 8 Labour in favour; Conservatives, Non-aligned Independent and 1 Labour against]

[Voting record is included at Appendix C]

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

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

[Voting pattern: Conservatives in favour; Liberal Democrats, Labour and Independents against; Non-aligned Independent abstained]

[Voting record is included at Appendix E]

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

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

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

[Voting record is included at Appendix G]

The Chair opened the debate on the main Business Plan and invited the Chairs of the Policy and Service Committees, if they wished, to speak.

Following further discussion, the substantive motion being put to a vote was carried:

- a) Approve the Business Plan for 2024-29, including supporting budget, business cases, consultation responses and other material, in light of all the planning activities undertaken to date (Appendix 2 to the January S&RP report) and amend the Council's funding following the Final Local Government Financial Settlement announcement as follows:

<b>Additional grant announced on 5 February</b>	<b>£m</b>
Social Care Grant [one-off]	4.8
Services Grant [permanent]	0.04
Business Rates levy surplus return [one-off]	0.43
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5.27</b>

- b) Approve the Directorate budget allocations as set out in each Directorate table in section 3 of the Business Plan.
- c) Approve a total county budget requirement in respect of general expenses applicable to the whole County area as a result of £1,164,584,542.
- d) Approve a recommended County Precept for Council Tax from District Councils of £396,467,953.11 (to be received in equal instalments in accordance with the fall-back provisions of the Local Authorities (Funds) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 1995).
- e) Approve a Council Tax increase for each Band of property, based on the number of "Band D" equivalent properties notified to the County Council by the Districts (244,760.5), reflecting a 2% Adult Social Care Precept increase and a 2.99% increase in basic Council Tax precept:

<b>Band</b>	<b>Ratio</b>	<b>Amount</b>
A	6/9	1,079.88
B	7/9	1,259.86
C	8/9	1,439.84
<b>D</b>	<b>9/9</b>	<b>1,619.82</b>
E	11/9	1,979.78
F	13/9	2,339.74
G	15/9	2,699.70
H	18/9	3,239.64

- f) Approve the Capital Strategy as set out in Section 6 of the Business Plan including:
- Commitments from schemes already approved;
  - Expenditure on new schemes in 2024-25.
- g) Approve the Treasury Management Strategy as set out in Section 7 of the Business Plan, including:
- i. The council's policy on the making of the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) for the repayment of debt, as required by the Local Authorities (Capital Finance & Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008.
  - ii. The Affordable Borrowing Limit for 2024-25 (as required by the Local Government Act 2003).
  - iii. The Investment Strategy for 2024-25 and the Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix 3 of Section 7 of the Business Plan.
- h) Consider the recommendations set out in the addendum, to be circulated as soon as practicable, in order to incorporate relevant updates on the final Local Government Finance Settlement.
- i) Authorise the Executive Director of Finance and Resources, as the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, to make technical revisions to the Business Plan, including the foregoing recommendations to the County Council, so as to take into account any changes deemed appropriate including but not limited to;
- i. the final tax base, business rates and forecast local taxation receipts for 2024-25 from the billing authorities (due by 31 January 2024).
  - ii. the final Local Government Finance Settlement from Government (expected early February 2024) alongside other grant announcements, outside of the settlement.

- j) Amend the Council’s gross and net revenue spend, allocating the budget initially to corporate resources to transfer to service/directorate budgets during the year as spend is allocated and committed:

<b>Business Planning Reference</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Amount (2024-25) £m</b>
A/R.4.011 A/R.4.012	Children in Care Placements Pressure	3.10
E/R.5.002 E/R.5.003	Children’s Social Care Academy	0.40
New	Special Educational Needs and Disability capacity to transform	0.50
New	Home to School Transport capacity to transform	0.57
New	Additional Mental Health Support	0.40
New	Review of Adult Social Care Fees and Charges to support anti-poverty measures	0.20
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5.27</b>

- k) Note the Council’s revised Medium Term Financial position as follows:

<b>£000</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>	<b>2027-28</b>	<b>2028-29</b>
<b>Budget Gap</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23,480</b>	<b>25,746</b>	<b>25,958</b>	<b>24,581</b>

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

[Voting record is included in Appendix H]

## 195. Independent Remuneration Panel – Review of Indexation of Members’ Allowances

It was moved by the Chair of Council, Councillor Kindersley, seconded by the Vice-Chair of Council, Councillor Dew, that the recommendations, as set on the Council agenda on page 43, be approved with the clarification that indexation would take effect from 1 April 2023 and 1 April 2024 respectively.

Following discussion and upon being put to the vote, it was agreed by majority to:

- a) Formally receive the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel.
- b) Accept the recommendations as they stand.
- c) Confirm the dates of 1 April 2023 and 1 April 2024 which was when the recommendations would come into effect.

- d) Authorise the Service Director: Legal and Governance to revise the existing scheme to reflect the outcome of the Council's deliberations and to take any consequential action arising therefrom.

[Voting pattern: Liberal Democrats, Labour and 2 Independents in favour; Non-aligned Independent, 13 Conservatives and 1 Independent against; 2 Conservatives abstained]

## 196. Item for determination from Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee

### Treasury Management Report – Mid-Year Report 2023-24

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

Following discussion, it was resolved unanimously by affirmation to:

Note the Treasury Management mid-year report for 2023-24.

## 197. Committee – Allocation of seats and substitutes to political groups in accordance with the political balance rules

It was moved by the Chair of Council, Councillor Kindersley, seconded by the Vice-Chair of Council, Councillor Dew, 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 tabled report under Item 10.

## 198. Questions

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

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

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

No questions were submitted under Council Procedure Rule 9.2

Chair

## County Council – 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024

### Chair's Announcements

#### People

##### County Councillor Mac McGuire

It is with deep regret that the Chair reports the recent death of County Councillor Mac McGuire, who represented the Sawtry, Norman Cross, and Yaxley and Farcet Divisions on behalf of the Conservative party from 1985 to 2023. Councillor McGuire held many prominent positions on the Council including Chair of the Council from 2019 to 2021. The Council's thoughts are with his family and friends at this very sad time.

##### Former Chief Executive, John Barratt

It is with regret that the Chair reports the recent death of the former Chief Executive of Cambridgeshire County Council, John Barratt. Mr Barratt took on the newly created role in 1973 and served until 1986. The Council's thoughts are with his family and friends at this very sad time.

##### Former Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner Sir Graham Bright

It is with regret that the Chair reports the recent death of the first Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Sir Graham Bright. Sir Graham served in this role between 2012 and 2016. The Council's thoughts are with his family and friends at this very sad time.

##### New Pro-Vice Chancellor (Innovation) Appointment – Dr Diarmuid O'Brien

The University Council has appointed Dr Diarmuid O'Brien as the University of Cambridge's new Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Innovation), taking up the role in April 2024.

#### Messages

##### Cambridgeshire's Archaeological Collection

The [skeleton of a man who was crucified in Roman-era Cambridgeshire](#) is on display as part of an exhibition at the British Museum, after a loan of the remains was agreed by the county council. The exhibition runs from 1 February to 23 June and explores the reality of daily life for the men, women and children who were part of the Roman Empire. The local find was also the subject of a BBC4 documentary, [The Cambridgeshire Crucifixion](#), which aired last month and is an example of the great work that the Council's Historic Environment Team (HET) undertakes.

##### Huntingdonshire District Council Chair's Christmas carol service

Councillor Stephen Ferguson attended the Huntingdonshire District Council Carol Service at All Saint's Church, Huntingdon.

##### Councillor McGuire's funeral

The Vice Chair, Councillor Douglas Dew attended Councillor Mac McGuire's funeral at Huntingdon Crematorium and the wake at the Marriott Huntingdon.

## Cambridgeshire Care Provider Conference

The Vice Chair, Councillor Douglas Dew opened the afternoon session of the Cambridgeshire Care Provider Conference at Burgess Hall in St Ives.

## Phase 2 Turf Cutting Ceremony at Northstowe Secondary College

The Chair attended Northstowe College and the beginning of its phase 2 work. Phase 2 will introduce a 600-pupil place expansion of the existing secondary school accommodation, a new 400-pupil place Post-16 Centre on the Northstowe Secondary College site, a 630-pupil place primary school, and a new pre-school providing 156 half-day places. Notably, the new Post-16 Centre and Primary School will include additional provisions for children with Special Educational Needs.

## Chevin Sermon at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Cambridge

The Chair attended the Mayor of Cambridge, Councillor Jenny Gawthorpe Wood's Chevin Sermon at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Cambridge.

## Holocaust Memorial Day Flag at New Shire Hall

The Chair raised the flag to mark Holocaust Memorial Day, accompanied by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, Mrs Julie Spence. The theme for this year's remembrance was the Fragility of Freedom.

## Tree Planting at New Shire Hall

There is now a new tree at New Shire Hall, as part of the end of the late Queen's Green Canopy initiative, trees were gifted to each Lieutenancy to mark the Coronation of King Charles III. Cambridgeshire's is now at New Shire Hall, to provide the new town of Alconbury Weald with its first bit of history.

## Holocaust Memorial Day Commemorative Service

The Chair attended the Holocaust Memorial Day Commemorative Service at St John's Church, Cathedral Square Peterborough hosted by the Mayor of Peterborough, Councillor Nick Sandford.

## Huntingdonshire District Council Holocaust Memorial Day Service

The Chair attended Huntingdonshire District Council's Holocaust Memorial Day Service at Huntingdon Town Hall. As part of the service the Chair along with other dignitaries lit a candle to memorialise the loss of life in the Holocaust and other genocides.

## Progress Pride Flag raised at New Shire Hall

The Progress Pride Flag is being flown for the month of February to mark LBGTQ+ History Month, the Chair and Chief Executive Stephen Moir raised the flag at the start of the month to mark this.

## Royal Visit by Her Majesty the Queen

The Chair attended the Meadows Community Centre in Cambridge where he was part of the line-up that met Her Majesty the Queen.



## Kings Award for Voluntary Service Presentation

The Chair attended Peterborough Cathedral where the Chinese Community in Peterborough were presented their King's Award for Voluntary Service by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant, Mrs Julie Spence.

## Chinese New Year, 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and King's Award for Voluntary Service Celebration

The Vice Chair, Councillor Douglas Dew attended a three part celebration at Peterborough Cathedral hosted by the Chinese Community in Peterborough. This was to celebrate their King's Award for Voluntary Service presentation, the Chinese New Year on 10th February for the Year of the Dragon and the 10th Anniversary of the Community.

**Proposer:** Councillor L Nethsingha

**Seconder:** Councillor E Meschini

**Joint Administration Amendment to Agenda Item No.7 - Proposed Business Plan for 2024-29  
for Consideration at Full Council 13 February 2024**

**AMENDMENT**

- a) Add: and Amend the Council's funding following the Final Local Government Financial Settlement announcements, as follows:

<b>Additional grant announced on 5 February</b>	<b>£m</b>
Social Care Grant [one-off]	4.8
Services Grant [permanent]	0.04
Business Rates levy surplus return [one-off]	0.43
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5.27</b>

- c) Replace (rec c): Approve a total county budget requirement in respect of general expenses applicable to the whole County area as a result of £1,164,584,542
- j) New recommendation: To Add and amend the Council's gross and net revenue spend, allocating the budget initially to corporate resources to transfer to service/directorate budgets during the year as spend is allocated and committed:

<b>Business Planning Reference</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Amount (2024-25) £m</b>
A/R.4.011 A/R.4.012	Children in Care Placements Pressure	3.10
E/R.5.002 E/R.5.003	Children's Social Care Academy	0.40
New	Special Educational Needs and Disability capacity to transform	0.50
New	Home to School Transport capacity to transform	0.57
New	Additional Mental Health Support	0.40

New	Review of Adult Social Care Fees and Charges to support anti-poverty measures	0.20
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5.27</b>

k) New recommendation: Note the Council's revised Medium Term Financial position as follows:

£000	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
<b>Budget Gap</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23,480</b>	<b>25,746</b>	<b>25,958</b>	<b>24,581</b>

## END OF AMENDMENT

1.1 The funding revisions set out above are to be applied as follows, in accordance with the stipulation that these support investment in frontline services:

Business Planning Reference	Item	Amount (2024-25) £m	Description
A/R.4.011 A/R.4.012	Children in Care Placements Pressure	3.10	The increase in social care placements and costs is provided for on an ongoing basis in 2024-25 but was planned to be funded from reserves for one year. This cost forms part of the pressures for 2025/26 and has not been baselined due to a drive to improve placements and cost management. The Social Care grant will be used to enable two years of funding, but with a key focus being on enabling the Directorate to convert a higher proportion of staff to permanent/employed status and reduce the levels of reliance on agency workers. This will further aid driving down costs and improving placements to manage this pressure across the medium-term financial plan. This proposal is also consistent with the Government's provisions relating to a Local Productivity Plan and the basis for this funding allocation.
E/R.5.002 E/R.5.003	Children's Social Care Academy	0.40	The current proposals provide for one year funding of support for growing our directly employed Children's social care workforce via apprentices and our CARE academy. This grant will be used to extend that to two years support. This will complement the additional

Business Planning Reference	Item	Amount (2024-25) £m	Description
			investment proposed for Children's Social Care to reduce reliance on agency workers and increase the number of employed qualified social workers within the Council.
New	Special Educational Needs and Disability capacity to transform	0.50	One off capacity will be provided to the service to work with schools, parents and other partners, including the NHS, to focus provision and costs to deliver more rapidly the necessary service change and improvement. This will also strengthen the Council's delivery of the Safety Value agreement with the Department for Education. This allocation aligns fully with the Government's intent for the use of this one-off funding allocation.
New	Home to School Transport capacity to transform	0.57	One off capacity to accelerate the delivery of change and improvement, working with operators and the Combined Authority to ensure more sustainable transport solutions in an integrated manner and to embed options with lower costs.
New	Additional Mental Health Support	0.40	This one-off investment seeks to respond to the feedback received through the Quality of Life Survey to expand upon existing resources in communities to enable a targeted and preventative approach to support adult mental health and wellbeing. This approach will not only align with existing resource allocated to adult mental health services at a community level and will draw upon the insights from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Census Data and other data sources to ensure this is targeted in concert with our Closer to Communities programme. This will include improved ease of access to services and working with relevant mental health providers from the local voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE).

<b>Business Planning Reference</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Amount (2024-25) £m</b>	<b>Description</b>
New	Review of Adult Social Care Fees and Charges to support anti-poverty measures	0.20	The Council is reviewing how it has applied the legislation and applying its charging policy, using areas of good practice, including comparators from neighbouring councils and wider, to help inform this piece of work. This review will also consider the current Court of Protection processes and work to address the levels of debt, arising from this area of work.
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5.27</b>	

1.2 The revisions above provide funding, in 2024-25, to the services recognised as areas of concern for residents through the quality-of-life survey, and as major pressures financially through the business planning process. The proposals support the children in care placement budget, which has increased due to the very high cost of placements and market pressures. One off funding is also proposed to increase capacity in some of our key services and to support improvement and transformation. These items increase the council's gross budget by £5.27m.

### Impact on future years.

1.3

Ref	Title	2024-25 £000	2025-26 £000	2026-27 £000
A/R.4.012	Children in Care Placements pressure - reserves funding	-	-3,100	3,100
E/R.5.003	Learning and Development - Children's Academy funding from reserves	-	-400	400
H/R.5.002 [new]	SEND capacity	500	-500	-
H/R.5.003 [new]	Home to School Transport capacity	570	-530	-
H/R.5.004 [new]	Additional Mental Health Support	500	-500	-
H/R.5.005 [new]	Fees and Charges review	200	-200	-

The above allocations enable planned reserves use across several lines in 2024-25 to be deferred by a year to 2025-26. The ongoing services grant allocation also provides for a recurring budget allocation. Finance tables in section 3 of the business plan would therefore be updated to show:

1.4 Consequently, there is an impact on the budget gap for 2025-26 and 2026-27. The revised budget gaps would therefore be per the below table, replacing those referenced in 3.7 of the main council report:

£000	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
<b>Budget Gap</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23,480</b>	<b>25,746</b>	<b>25,958</b>	<b>24,581</b>

1.5 This would also impact on earmarked reserve projections, through the deferral of reserves use by a year to 2025-26.

## **2. Officers comments**

### **Section 151 Officer comments:**

- 2.1 The proposals match the funding available and treat the expenditure in accordance with the expectation of the mainly one-off nature of those funds. The purposes and nature of the funding is matched by the nature of the spend, in that the majority of the additional funds are for social care in line with the final settlement requirements.
- 2.2 This has no new impact on reserves from the assessment provided to Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee on 30 January, and thus there are no new matters or risks for Council to consider.

### **Monitoring Officer technical comments:**

- 2.3 Under section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 the Section 151 Officer is required to report to the authority on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations required to be made by the Council and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves. These are the estimates which are contained within the main budget report and also require a separate evaluation of the financial sustainability of any amendments proposed. This is contained in the evaluation set out above.
- 2.4 The Council is then required to "have regard" to the Section 151 officer's comments on the amendment but it is not required to adopt the recommendations in it. However, Members must demonstrate they have acted reasonably if they do not adopt the recommendations.
- 2.5 The Section 151 officer considers that there is no change in the level of risk to the financial sustainability of the Council if the amendment is adopted.

### **Head of Paid Service technical comments:**

- 2.6 The Section 151 officer's comments set out the technical assessment of the amendment and the implications this may have for the financial sustainability of the Council, if approved. These have positive impacts on the Council's medium-term business and financial plans, as well as delivery against the Strategic Framework and in response to the Council's Quality-of-Life Survey.
- 2.7 The role of Head of Paid Service, in accordance with Section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, is responsible for the structure and organisation of the County Council's staffing. A focus on creating permanence in children's social care staffing and further growing our own, directly employed workforce, through the Children's CARE academy is recognised as a key factor in improving outcomes. It also accords with the direction set with the Written Ministerial Statements from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up,

Housing and Communities, which encourages authorities to reduce agency worker expenditure and to prioritise these additional funds towards areas such as Children's and Adult Social Care, including Mental Health, SEND provision and Home to School Transport.

**Conclusion:**

- 2.8 Overall, the proposals contained within this amendment are deemed financially competent, are aligned to the Policy and Budget Framework for the County Council and are considered deliverable. Consequently, these do not add any new risks to delivery of a legally balanced budget, should this amendment be approved.





Proposer: Councillor S Count

Seconder: Councillor M Goldsack

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**Conservative Group Amendment to Agenda Item No.7 - Proposed Business Plan for 2024-29**
**for Consideration at Full Council 13 February 2024**
**AMENDMENT**

- b) Add: with the exception of inserting the additional text, as set out in the appendix, to the Strategic Framework to follow the Joint Administration Foreword.
- c) Add: and Amend service/directorate revenue budget allocations resulting from the following changes:

Type of Proposal	£000	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Remarks from amendment proposer and seconder
	<b>Budget Gap in Draft Business Plan</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>26,981</b>	<b>22,246</b>	<b>25,958</b>	<b>24,581</b>	
Inflation	Revise 2024-25 Staffing Inflation assumption from 5% to 4.5% (revised year 1 assumption only)	-700					Pay uplifts determined or influenced by national negotiations; some county council comparative assumptions at 4.5% or lower. Assumptions for years 2 to 5 remain unaltered.
Savings	Increase 2024-25 Vacancy Savings Target	-500					Target exceeded by £3m in 2022-23 and forecast at least £1m overachievement in 2023-24; the proposals in the business plan to increase expectation can be increased by a further £500k reflecting these patterns
Reserves	Release uncommitted Change & Digital Reserve	-2,400	2,400				While the proposed business plan includes some future indicative movements on this reserve there is £2.4m for which there are no current/active plans to spend.

Reserves	Release funding review shortfall reserve	-4,666	4,666				Section 25 assessment suggests mid-range resilience and robust reserves. We consider an adverse impact from funding review is low likelihood and may be phased, and that this reserve could be redeployed now.
Reserves	Apply uncommitted Adults Risk Reserve amount	-3,750	3,750				It is timely to apply the uncommitted Adults reserve to the significant pressures in this budget. £500m extra has been announced nationally for social care since the publication of the S,R&P papers.
Reserves	Household support fund: assume Department for Work and Pensions grant taper enables release of reserves	-1,500	1,500				Indications from Minister there will be a tailing off of the grant, and we reflect a cautious assumption in this line. Budget papers at S,R&P publication didn't include any potential future finance. Plans for holiday vouchers expenditure remains unchanged.
Reserves	Create Highways Operations Improvements Fund	12,316	-12,316				Our plans create a Highways Operations Improvement Fund
Reserves	Sustainable withdrawals: Highways Operations Improvements Fund	-2,250	300	-1,850		3,284	This line shows (in the normal recurrent business plan presentation format) the relative draw from reserve year-to-year.
Priority	Increase investment in Highways maintenance	3,450	-300	1,850		-3,284	Investing an additional £18,316k revenue across the next 5 years in Highways.
<b>Revised Budget Gap</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>26,981</b>	<b>22,246</b>	<b>25,958</b>	<b>24,581</b>	<b>Year-by-year budget gaps unchanged from substantive proposal</b>

d) Replace: Approve a total county budget requirement in respect of general expenses applicable to the whole County area of £1,160,773,542.

f) Add: and Amend capital budget funding and allocations resulting from the following changes:

<b>Capital Proposal (non-recurrent) £000</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>	<b>2027-28</b>	<b>2028-29</b>	<b>Remarks from amendment proposer</b>
Recognise capital receipts from disposal of buildings in office estate	-1,550	-1,850				£11,400k is itemised in capital receipts over 3 years in the papers. Revenue savings have been recognised in the published papers but the capital receipts had not. Recognising £3,400k (out of £11.4m) over 2 years is feasible.
Apply capital receipts to public priorities fund: Highways investment	1,550	1,850				No impact on prudential borrowing
<b>Impact on capital</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Fully funded by additional capital receipts</b>

j) New recommendation: Amend references to reserve levels throughout the business plan to reflect the following resulting impacts of the foregoing amendments:

<b>Revised reserve projections £000</b>	<b>Forecast opening balance</b>				
	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>	<b>2027-28</b>	<b>2028-29</b>
Change and Digital Reserve	<b>859</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Funding Review shortfall reserve	<b>2,749</b>	<b>2,261</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Adults Risk Reserve	<b>914</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
MTFS support	<b>5,895</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Highways Operations Improvement Fund	<b>12,316</b>	<b>10,066</b>	<b>8,116</b>	<b>4,316</b>	<b>516</b>

k) New recommendation: Utilise Ukraine grant funds in accordance with conditions, tasking this Council to prioritise community integration, education/service provision and alleviating hardship.

**END OF AMENDMENT**

**Proposals restated in absolute terms (departmental budgets: revenue and capital), £000**

		2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	
Inflation	Revise 2024-25 Staffing Inflation assumption to from 5% to 4.5% (revised year 1 assumption only)	-700	-700	-700	-700	-700	Pay uplifts determined or influenced by national negotiations; some county council comparatives assumptions at 4.5% or lower. Assumptions for years 2 to 5 remain unaltered.
Savings	Increase 2024-25 Vacancy Savings Target	-500	-500	-500	-500	-500	Target exceeded by £3m in 2022-23 and forecast at least £1m overachievement in 2023-24; the proposals in the business plan to increase expectation can be increased by a further £500k reflecting these patterns
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>Savings assumptions</b>	<b>-1,200</b>	<b>-1,200</b>	<b>-1,200</b>	<b>-1,200</b>	<b>-1,200</b>	
Priority	Recurrent revenue investment in Highways Operations Improvements	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	Revisions to workforce budget assumptions (above) enable increased Highways investment
Priority	Highways Operations Improvements (Funded from revenue reserve)	2,250	1,950	3,800	3,800	516	By bringing forward office estate capital receipts we are able to reduce the draw on reserves for the next two years
Priority	Highways Operations Improvements (Funded by capital receipts)	1,550	1,850				
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>Annual Investment in Highways Operations</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>1,716</b>	<b>Total additional investment £21.7m into Highways Operations Improvements across 2024-29</b>

**Proposals restated in absolute terms (reserves)**

2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
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Reserves	Release uncommitted Change & Digital Reserve	-2,400	0	0	0	0	While the proposed business plan includes some future indicative movements on this reserve there is £2.4m for which there are no current/active plans to spend.
Reserves	Release funding review shortfall reserve	-4,666	0	0	0	0	Section 25 assessment suggests mid-range resilience and robust reserves. We consider an adverse impact from funding review is low likelihood and likely to be phased, and that this reserve could be redeployed.
Reserves	Apply uncommitted Adults Risk Reserve amount	-3,750	0	0	0	0	It is timely to apply the uncommitted Adults reserve to the significant pressures in this budget. £500m extra has been announced nationally for social care since the publication of the S,R&P papers.
Reserves (neutral)	Household support fund: assume Department for Work and Pensions grant taper enables release or redeployment of reserves. £1,500k	-1,500	0	0	0	0	Indications from Minister there will be a tailing off of the grant, and we reflect a cautious assumption in this line. Budget papers at S, R and P published didn't include any potential future finance. Plans for holiday vouchers expenditure remains unchanged.
Reserves	Create Highways Operations Improvements Fund	12,316	0	0	0	0	By redistributing from the above reserves we propose to refocus our resources on Highways Improvements
Reserves	Sustainable drawdown: Highways Public Improvement Fund	-2,250	-1,950	-3,800	-3,800	-516	Deployment of £12,316k reserves across five years
<b>Reserves</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>-2,250</b>	<b>-1,950</b>	<b>-3,800</b>	<b>-3,800</b>	<b>-516</b>	<b>Plans begin with £2,250k draw from reserves`</b>
Reserves	Net Impact compared to substantive	<b>-750</b>	<b>-1,950</b>	<b>-3,800</b>	<b>-3,800</b>	<b>-516</b>	First year additional draw on reserves is £750k only compared to substantive proposal- DWP grant assumed

### Purpose of the report

1. To present to Full Council one proposed amendment from the Conservative Group to the budget recommended by Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee on 30 January 2024, with officers' technical comments on the impact to the budget.

## Financial technical comments

2. Given the overall level of reserves, the future years funding gaps and uncertainties over funding the proposals introduce significant risk to the Council's financial sustainability. The pay assumptions rely on what other councils are proposing without reference to Cambridgeshire officers' assumptions. Local Government Association (LGA) briefings have drawn out the risk arising from the increasing national living wage (NLW) on the pay differentiation with the lower pay bands and the impact this could have on pay inflation. Whilst discussions have not begun this would leave a shortfall should the impact of pay awards be higher than 4.5%. Likewise, the greater vacancy target adds further risk. It was noted at Adult and Health Committee that this could impact performance.
3. Turning to the use of reserves proposed this goes against the Section 151 officer's advice as it introduces further risk in future years to delivery of savings and future prudent coverage for potential funding shortfalls. The Change and Digital and Adult Risk reserves are earmarked to assist in large scale transformation of the services and to deliver efficiency in processes. The use of these on Highways would restrict the pace of change across the Council and reduce the ways of making and managing future year savings, driving more cuts than efficiency change. The release of the Funding Review Reserve increases the risk in later years that if following a rest of local government's funding Cambridgeshire experiences a loss or a less than inflationary increase, there will be further shortfalls that will need to be addressed in year. As the timing of these announcements is often late in the financial planning cycle this could lead to more arbitrary cuts needed in that year. As such the proposals to use reserves would likely need to include a provision to restate reserves to levels when setting future years budgets to meet the s151 officer current advice.
4. The assumed tapering of the Household Support Fund (HSF) has not been formerly announced, as such we have no confirmation of any plans or conditions of spend or figures. So, for example if there is no extension announced or if it is and the proposed taper were to fund only older vulnerable adults, then either scenario would mean a cut would be needed to be made to the current proposals for holiday vouchers. As it is expected any announcement on the future of the HSF will come alongside or after the Chancellor's budget on 6 March this will be unknown for the budget discussion at Full Council.
5. The assumptions around capital receipts are assumed reasonable and deliverable.
6. The proposed £21.7 million investment over 2024-29 would draw from the resources noted above.

### **Monitoring Officer technical comments**

7. Under section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 the Chief Financial Officer is required to report to the authority on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations required to be made by the Council and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves. These are the estimates which are contained within the main budget report and also require a separate evaluation of the financial sustainability of any amendments proposed. This is contained in the evaluation set out above.
8. The Council is then required to "have regard" to the Section 151 officer's comments on the amendment but it is not required to adopt the recommendations in it. However, Members must demonstrate they have acted reasonably if they do not adopt the recommendations.
9. The Section 151 officer considers that there is an increased level of risk to the financial sustainability of the Council if the amendment is adopted.

### **Head of Paid Service technical comments**

10. The Section 151 officer's comments set out the technical assessment of the amendment and the implications this may have for the financial sustainability of the Council, if approved. In particular, the assessment notes that the Change and Digital and Adult risk reserves proposed for reallocation are already earmarked to support the transformation and improvement of the Council, which in turn would unlock future efficiencies and savings opportunities. Members will therefore need to give due regard to the risk associated with reallocating these reserves versus the ability of the County Council to deliver change and improved effectiveness over the medium term.
11. The role of Head of Paid Service, in accordance with Section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, is responsible for the structure and organisation of the County Council's staffing. Consequently, the assessment by the Section 151 officer with respect to an increased vacancy saving factor leading to greater risk is one that is endorsed. An enhanced vacancy saving factor, in addition to existing financial assumptions, has the potential to create greater risk with regard to service delivery, sustainability and performance by the authority. However, the assessment of such risk and the Council's appetite about accepting this is a matter for elected members to determine, having received officer advice.

### **Conclusion**



12. Overall, the proposals seek to draw from resources largely aimed at future years financial stability and to provide for change that drives efficiencies. As such these proposals introduce risk assumptions contra to officer's advice and could place greater pressures in future years.

**Insertion of the following text:**

***The joint administration is composed of an alliance between, Liberal Democrats, Labour and the Independent group. In their budget we are grateful they have finally recognised our campaigns to increase the highways maintenance budget and allocate some extra resource there. Over the last two years they voted down the previous Conservative proposed increases in the highways and footpaths maintenance budget. We also thank them for performing a U-Turn on their change to the weedkilling policy and proposals to cut winter gritting routes, which we campaigned against.***

***We note the Joint Administration proposal includes once again imposing the legal maximum Tax increase. A budget gap of £37.1m between funding and expenditure is referred to throughout the documents, with accompanying press releases wholly attributing the gap to insufficient funding, the weather, the previous administration, a shortage of staff, inflation, demography, and unforeseen events. However, the Conservative group views the picture slightly differently. We agree there is a budget gap which we all need to close. However, since taking control of Cambridgeshire County Council we can see multiple areas where this has increased due to decisions of the Joint Administration where savings could have been made or income increased. Examples such as the cost overruns on energy schemes adding up to £9.1m, and the lost revenue due to late delivery another £11.4m. Further examples where increased costs or lost revenue are passed onto the taxpayer are the failure to close the sale of Shire Hall. The increased management costs and exit payments to officers, largely caused by dissolving the partnership with Peterborough City Council.***

***Apart from the lack of efficiencies in leading the Council, their business plan proposals also include political priorities of the administration. Examples such as their policy to pay the Real Living Wage instead of the National Living wage. Their choice costs the Council an additional £1.733m a year. Enhancing the holiday voucher scheme, another extra cost to the Cambridgeshire Council Taxpayer, the future cost of which is estimated at £3.0m per annum. So, we the Conservatives believe that there is an element of self-reflection missing from their narrative over who, and why, the council is facing such a budget gap.***

***We would also do things differently, for example accelerate deployment of the Ukraine grant funds. The joint administration currently has £2m languishing in reserves, with no plans for its use over the next 5 years. Whereas we would help more people and communities earlier when they need it most. We would also integrate the Public Health responsibilities into the Communities committee's area of responsibility. Enabling a much more integrated approach closer to the people.***

***In terms of Conservative priorities for this budget, they are not political but are wholly aligned to our communities' priorities. Highways operations, which includes roads, footpaths, cycleways, verges, drainage, signing and lineage and bridleways, takes precedence. We therefore propose a much needed extra £21.716m be allocated to Highways operations. We believe residents will not see the necessary and needed improvement to these areas, without an extra allocation, over***

***and above that currently proposed. We disagree with the Joint Administration's proposal for a maximum Tax increase and want to Lower the burden of Taxation. However, as a party in opposition we have to be realistic. So, in proposing our amendment, to invest £21.716m extra in Highways operations, without increasing the substantive council tax proposal presented, without cutting spending and by drawing only £2.25m from over £150m of reserves next year is both prudent and credible. We have chosen not to propose a lower Council Tax, which would inevitably be defeated. It is more important to us to try and gain support to improve our Roads, Paths, and Cycleways, than argue for what could have helped desperately strained household budgets, when we know that vote will be lost. We therefore hope sufficient members of the administration support our amendment and do not let the opportunity to improve our highways and byways pass them by.***



**Proposer:** Councillor S Count

**Secunder:** Councillor M Goldsack

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**Second Conservative Group Amendment to Agenda Item No.7 - Proposed Business Plan for 2024-29  
for Consideration at Full Council 13 February 2024**

**AMENDMENT**

- j) Add: provided that no expenditure shall commence against the items labelled “new” (SEND capacity to transform, home to school transport capacity to transform, additional mental health support and review of ASC fees and charges anti-poverty measures) until a business case has been prepared and full scrutiny undertaken by the relevant policy and service committee, delegating a final decision on release of funds to the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee.

**END OF AMENDMENT**

*There are no supplementary comments from the statutory chief officers on this amendment.*





## Questions

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

#### Question from Councillor Taylor:

Thank you, Chair. I noticed of the trial on the Demand Responsive Transport in Huntingdonshire over the last few years; East Cambs, Fenland and South Cambs will be trialling and collaborating with the community to define a service zone that offers maximum coverage to the rural communities. Will the current Demand Response Transport be delivered in Huntingdonshire? Will it be continued to be delivered in Huntingdonshire, because there is no report of that within the report? If so, will the routes be the same or can Huntingdonshire residents see any extra zones?

#### Response from Councillor Nethsingha:

Thank you for your question, Simone. Yes, I am very pleased that the Demand Responsive Transport scheme is going to be expanded to cover other areas of Cambridgeshire. I think it will be interesting to see how those work out, but it is a sign of the success of that programme that it is being expanded to cover three new areas. My understanding is that the scheme in Huntingdonshire will continue, but I think that the zone that is covered is going to change slightly. I think that's because some of the zone that is covered at the moment is also quite well covered by conventional bus services. So, what they are going to try and do is alter the zone slightly, so that it focuses more thoroughly on areas which are not covered by normal bus services, in order to try and make sure that the ridership is encouraged onto the normal bus services where they exist and that the Ting service is more available in places where there is no bus service. But I am reasonably confident, and Neil is nodding at me from the middle encourages me to think, that all of this will be brought with much more detail to the next Highways and Transport Committee. Thank you.

#### Supplementary Question from Councillor Taylor:

Thank you, Chair. Do we have a current time limit? Do we know when these are going to be delivered to the other parts of the county as well as Huntingdonshire's change?

#### Response from Councillor Nethsingha:

So, the next Highways and Transport Committee is on the 13<sup>th</sup> March. I am reasonably certain that it will take longer than that to set these services up because there will need to be conversations with operators about expanding it; but I know that the Combined Authority is getting on with this as quickly as it feels it reasonably can.

#### Question from Councillor Shailer:

Thank you very much, Chair. Every bus stop is an active transport hub, is about connectivity hubs and joined up networks. Yet currently Whittlesey, for instance, doesn't have bus connectivity with the rail station. It is exciting to see the difference between infrastructure planning at the Combined Authority and much of the current bus business models. Does Councillor Nethsingha agree with me that routes, like the proposed one between Chatteris and Manea rail station, represent a game changer for many in our rural communities? And Chair, on Wisbech rail, I can go from Cambridge to March in 32 minutes by rail. Now, even though Wisbech is very much closer to March, it takes 38 minutes by the fastest bus. Reinstating the 11 kilometre rail link to March would mean you could go



from Wisbech to Edinburgh, Wisbech to London, or to Stansted. Does Councillor Nethsingha agree that to reinstate the rail link, would not only connect Wisbech to March, but it would help connect Wisbech to the world? Thank you.

#### Response from Councillor Nethsingha:

Thank you. Yes, Neil I agree with you. Through the Chair, sorry. Yes, Chair, I do agree with Councillor Shailer on the benefits of the bus services, and I think that the new connections to the Chatteris and Manea stations will be really important for those residents. On Wisbech rail, I think there has been a long-standing view from this Council that reintroducing rail along the line from Wisbech to March would be a really really desirable outcome. I continue to think that that would be great, but I am also extremely well aware of just how difficult introducing heavy rail links is. So, while I continue to support the idea of Wisbech rail, I think it would be wonderful, I think in the short term it would also really good if we could have a bus service that went from Wisbech to March in less than 38 minutes. Thank you.

#### Supplementary Question from Councillor Shailer:

I agree with that. Thank you very much, Chair.

#### Question from Councillor Bulat:

Thank you, Chair. I was really pleased to see Mayor and the Combined Authority recently announcing the 30 proposed improvements to bus services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. My question is on Demand Responsive Transport as well because of course, we have seen from the trial in Huntingdonshire that this has made a difference to so many people. But of course, that does come with a very high subsidy to be able to run it. Whilst I was keen to see the trials that are being announce in other areas as part of this bus reform package; I also see how there is a mention of how communities can, and should be, more involved so we can actually develop the routes that most benefit rural communities. As you already commented around the, through you Chair, there's already a comment around how some of the routes might benefit from perhaps more frequent services from existing operators rather than running thin on some of those routes. I think it is really key to prioritise the areas that don't have any buses currently rather than running on routes that already can benefit from improvements. So could Councillor Nethsingha tell Members more about how will communities be involved in this process, including of course Parish Councils but also bus user groups to ensure that those new trials are actually testing the routes that are most in need and therefore consequently can deliver the best value for money. Thank you.

#### Response from Councillor Nethsingha:

Thank you. So the first thing to say is that the proposals for the new routes that came forward to the Combined Authority Board, not quite as part of the Board papers but sort of alongside them, at the most recent meeting, were as a result of a consultation that the Combined Authority had undertaken asking many residents to come forward with ideas for new routes; so that whole process has been started with views from residents being taken into account. But there's not, there's no question, that as the process continues it will be really important to continue to engage with communities on where, and how, those routes can be most effectively rolled out, and how Demand Responsive Transport can be used most effectively to supplement and bring more people in to support the current routes as well. And that definitely Demand Responsive Transport is probably better used in the places where there aren't scheduled bus services, of which sadly there are still far too many across Cambridgeshire. So, I am sure that work will continue kind of focusing on moving forward together with, so there are, there's been some consultation, some routes are now being suggested, there are new areas for Demand Responsive Transport. That process will now move into conversations with

the bus operators, because actually talking to them about how we deliver these services, is also going to be really important. So, it's part of quite a long-term process but I am sure communities will need to continue to be engaged. I think the final thing to say is that for some communities, the best way to do that maybe through their District Councils because I know the Combined Authority is in engaging very closely with them. Thank you.

#### Supplementary Question from Councillor Bulat:

I am happy with the answer. I think it will be good to know, I know the work is in progress, to know more details when they are forthcoming around the engagement, especially with Districts and Parish but also just to highlight again, I think it is so important to actually involve the people who actually use the buses or wait for the buses and the buses don't show up. In this process the so kind of lived experience is very important, but thank you very much for your response today.

#### Question from Councillor Thompson:

Thank you, Chair. I think it is very similar to what has just been discussed so I understand that the Combined Authority have gone out through residents to give their stories and about buses and any recommendation new routes. So, they received some 268 stories and some 712 routes suggestions, which is actionable for them, and their suggested routes are going on to the Transport team. I think my question is just to ensure that they involve Parish Councils, as well as you mentioned District Councils, but I think Parish Councils and also Members as well because obviously we get quite a lot of queries, and it would be good to know some kind of timelines. Thank you, Chair.

#### Response from Councillor Nethsingha:

Thank you. Just to come back again to say that the next really important step in this process, I think will be the Transport and Infrastructure Committee for the Combined Authority which is on the 13<sup>th</sup> March, so there will be more detail in the papers for that meeting. But on the points that have been raised about engaging with Members and Parish Councillors, I will definitely feed that back into the Combined Authority to make sure that they are doing that. On the point raised by Councillor Bulat, about engaging with the people who actually use buses, and particularly the point about people waiting for a bus that doesn't turn up, I think the Combined Authority is extremely aware of the need for really good information and real time information. I think it will be, I think part of that is probably going to be more to do with the next steps once the discussions around franchising move forward; but it is something that has been raised over and over again that actually reliability and good information is really important. Thank you.

#### Question from Councillor S King:

Thank you, Chair. Through you, I just want to thank Councillor Shailer for his ringing endorsement of reopening the March to Wisbech railway line. It is an enthusiasm I absolutely share and have done for many years. I was very disappointed in Councillor Nethsingha's somewhat lukewarm response to that, and I think that, and would she agree with me, that that characterises the Joint Administration's attitude towards it and also the Combined Authority. Both of which are of course no longer Conservative controlled. And when they were Conservative controlled, there was absolute enthusiasm and commitment to reopening that line. So, let's hope we get a Conservative Administration back soon.

## Response from Councillor Nethsingha:

I think that might be a nightmare, Chair. I actually really don't agree that the Conservative Administration brought this forward or were in any way more proactive in making things happen around that line than the current Administration or the current Combined Authority. I did not express any lack of enthusiasm for a rail link between Wisbech and March; I think it would absolutely wonderful. I did express a certain amount of concern about whether it was deliverable and that is because having been a Member of this Council for many years, I am very well aware of the several occasions on which we have had motions to this Council supporting the reopening of the Bramley Line. I think the first one I was involved with was when Killian was the leader of the Liberal Democrat group which is quite a long time ago and I think it was brought by the Liberal Democrats; so, we have been supportive of that proposal of reopening the Bramley Line for years and years and years. There is no point being supportive of something if funding is not there and I would love the funding to be there, but given all the discussions we have had today about the lack of money to provide the most basic of services and repair our roads, it seems to me a little bit unlikely that that will be forthcoming from any government within next three or four years. And for people in Wisbech, I think having a good fast connection to the railway line in March is something that should not wait for many more decades. It needs to happen more quickly than that and that is why I also expressed my desire for a fast bus route; it is not because I am not enthusiastic about rail. Thank you.

## Supplementary Question from Councillor S King:

Would Councillor Nethsingha not agree that it does not help to get funding if you've basically already knocked it on the head? So, the way to get funding is to actually knock on doors and to get that funding and that is possible. But with this kind of lukewarm endorsement, which I stand by lukewarm, it is not going to happen, so she is right in that respect.

## Response from Councillor Nethsingha:

I do not agree that my endorsement was lukewarm. I think it was reflecting the realistic nature of current government funding; I wish it were not the case. I am very happy to knock on as many doors as necessary to try and get improved public transport from Wisbech to March and I will collaborate with anybody who wants to encourage that. I would be very happy to come and talk to Stephen Barclay, your MP, and encourage him to knock on as many doors as he can, he has quite good access. Thank you.

## Question from Councillor Goldsack:

Thank you Chair, and through you a two-point question to Councillor Nethsingha please. The first and foremost thanks to bringing up by Councillor Shailer, the transportation link of a bus route through to a train terminus is key, absolutely critical in getting people out of cars and getting them from A to B. However, the first part of my question is, could you go back to the Board and ensure that the attitude of bus providers has changed, when one is on record as saying: why would I take paying customers to another provider? Ok so that is a major hurdle that I think firmly lies and this was raised with the current Mayor of the CPCA as well. The second part of this is that there is no bus link from Soham high street to the Soham station which has been a great success since it was opened and that would be very very beneficial. Again, something I have asked and pushed the CPCA for but that was in the papers so I wonder if our Leader could do that for us as well, please. Thank you.

## Response from Councillor Nethsingha

So, on the first part of the question, I completely agree that any attitude from bus providers that connecting bus routes to stations is not in their interest is deeply frustrating and very irritating. It is something that I am sure the Combined Authority will be doing their very best make sure changes. But I think it is also a reflection of the utter failure of the Thatcherite deregulation of bus services and the terrible impact that that has had on bus services over many many years. I hope that that will change in the short term. On the bus connection to Soham station, I think that's a very excellent idea. I will be very happy to be supportive of it. If I have missed some response, then maybe you can ask it in your supplementary?

## Supplementary Question from Councillor Goldsack:

If that was going from what I was just mouthing, it was thank you.