

County Council – Minutes

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

Date: 17 March 2026

Time: 10.30 a.m. – 2.44 p.m.

Present:

Councillors:

Peter McDonald (Chair)

Tom Sanderson (Vice-Chair)

Henry Batchelor

Alex Beckett

Liam Beckett

Mike Black

Chris Boden

Adam Bostanci

Alex Bulat

Simon Bywater

Sarah Caine

Rory Clark

Laurence Damary-Homan

Yasmin Deter

Daniel Divine

Lorna Dupré

Jonny Edge

Peter Fane

Michael Fisher

Stefan Fisher

Colin Galbraith

Ian Gardener

Leedo George

Mark Goldsack

Bryony Goodliffe

Darren Green

Ros Hathorn

Tom Hawker-Dawson

Richard Howitt

Ricky Ioannides

David Keane

Julie Kerr

David Levien

Yannifer Malinowski

Ian Manning

Elisa Meschini

Matthew Morgan

Christopher Morris

Edna Murphy

Luis Navarro

Lucy Nethsingha

Andy Osborn

Chris Poulton

Geoffrey Seeff

James Stuart

Christopher Thornhill

Elliot Tong

John Wells

Alison Whelan

Christine Whelan

Graham Wilson

Robin Wyatt

Karen Young

Apologies for Absence:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bradnam, Hoy, Lowe, Martin, Rees, Sidlow, Tierney and Watt.

61. Minutes – 10 February 2026 and Motions Log

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2026 were approved as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Thornhill in the list of apologies, and signed by the Chair. The motions log was noted.

62. Chair's Announcements

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

Councillors observed a minute silence in memory of Luke Venni, Strategic HR Business Partner, and Genevieve Ray, Job Coach, Additional Needs Team.

63. Declarations of Interests

Councillor L Beckett declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in relation to Agenda Item 10(d) (Motion from Councillor Geoff Seeff), as the Council's representative and non-executive director for BID Huntingdon Limited.

64. Public Question Time

The Chair reported that one public question had been received, as set out in Appendix B.

65. Petitions

The Chair reported that one petition had been received from a member of the public, as set out in Appendix C.

66. Items for determination from Staffing and Service Appeals Committee

a) Senior Employee Pay Data and Chief Officer Pay Policy Statement

It was moved by the Chair of the Staffing and Service Appeals Committee, Councillor Morris, and seconded by the Vice-Chair of the Staffing and Service Appeals Committee, Councillor Murphy, that the recommendations from the Staffing and Service Appeals Committee, as set out on the Council agenda, be approved.

It was resolved unanimously by affirmation to:

Approve the Transparency Data and the Chief Officer Pay Policy subject to the exclusion of the Assistant Director of Education in the Tier 3 data, as this post sits in Tier 4 and therefore should not be reported.

b) Pay Gap Reporting

It was moved by the Chair of the Staffing and Service Appeals Committee, Councillor Morris, and seconded by the Vice-Chair of the Staffing and Service Appeals Committee, Councillor Murphy, that the recommendations from the Staffing and Service Appeals Committee, as set out in the Council agenda, be approved.

It was resolved unanimously by affirmation to:

- i) Approve the Pay Gap Report.
- ii) Approve and publish the Pay Gap Summary Publication.

67. Constitution and Ethics Committee recommendations – Proposed changes to the Constitution

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

Councillor Howitt moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Bywater, as set out in Appendix D.

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

[Voting pattern: Labour, Reform UK, 5 Conservatives and 1 Green in favour; 31 Liberal Democrat/Independent, 1 Conservative and 1 Green against; 1 Liberal Democrat/Independent abstained]

Councillor Howitt moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Wells, as set out in Appendix E.

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

[Voting pattern: Reform UK, Labour and 1 Green in favour; Liberal Democrat/Independent and Conservatives against; 1 Green abstained]

Following further discussion, upon being put to the vote, it was resolved to approve:

- (i) The removal of the limit on the number of motions at a Council meeting;
- (ii) The introduction of a total debate time for motions; and
- (iii) An amendment to the scope of motions, requiring them to only be about matters for which the Council has a responsibility.

[Voting pattern: Liberal Democrat/Independent in favour; Conservatives, Reform UK and Labour against; Greens abstained]

68. Motions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 10

Five motions had been submitted under Council Procedure Rule 10.

a) Motion from Councillor Elisa Meschini

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Meschini and seconded by Councillor Bulat.

This Council notes that:

- Humphries Way junction in Milton is classified as a “cluster site”
- 531 residents have to date signed a petition calling for safety improvements at Humphries Way junction in Milton
- a Section 106 Agreement was reached with Urban & Civic (U&C) whereby they would partially fund the works at the junction, the trigger point for the start of those works being the occupation of 250th dwelling
- U&C have stated in an e-mail sent to county council officers on 23 April 2025 that they are willing to release funds ahead of this occupation trigger, but investigations have identified increased costs owing to gas pipes at the site
- Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) is legally obliged to deliver the junction, failure to do so would mean CCC would breach the legal duty set out in the Section 106 agreement

- the index linked Section 106 funding for this project is expected to be £422,729 from U&C and £178,500 from Cambridge Research Park, leaving a funding shortfall as the project is expected to cost upwards of £1.2m to deliver

This Council accepts:

- residents' concerns and the poor track record of collisions on the A10 corridor from Ely to Cambridge and area around Waterbeach and Milton in particular. These works should not be delayed further

This Council resolves to:

- allocate funding from Road Safety Small Capital Projects and the Delivering Transport Strategy Aims Programme to this project
- further allocate funding to this project from the £20m capital pot approved at the meeting of Full Council on 10 February 2026 for 2027/28 as part of the 2026-31 business plan
- bring a report to the next meeting of the Highways and Transport Committee updating the committee on this decision, including a date by which works will start

Following discussion, the motion was carried unanimously by general consensus.

b) Motion from Councillor Alex Bulat

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Bulat and seconded by Councillor Meschini. The motion included alterations from the version included on the agenda, which were proposed by Councillor Bulat, and agreed by the meeting without discussion.

Additions in bold and deletions in strikethrough.

This Council notes that:

- **The** Humphries Way junction in Milton is ~~classified as a "cluster site"~~ **listed 27th on the County Council's Cluster Site list**
- ~~534~~ **606** residents have to date signed a petition calling for safety improvements at **the** Humphries Way junction in Milton
- A Section 106 Agreement was reached with Urban & Civic (U&C) whereby they would partially fund the works at the junction, the trigger point for the start of those works being the occupation of ~~250th~~ **300th** dwelling
- U&C have stated in an e-mail sent to county council officers on 23 April 2025 that they are willing to release funds ahead of this occupation trigger, but investigations have identified increased costs owing to gas pipes at the site
- Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) is legally obliged to deliver the junction, failure to do so would mean CCC would breach the legal duty set out in the Section 106 agreement
- the index linked Section 106 funding for this project is expected to be £422,729 from U&C and £178,500 from Cambridge Research Park, leaving a funding shortfall as the project is expected to cost upwards of £1.2m to deliver

- The Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority (**CPCA**) has a major scheme in progress looking at options to improve safety on the A10 between Cambridge and Ely.
- **The government has replaced the 'Integrated Transport Block' and 'Delivering Transport Strategy Aims' grants with a combined 'Transport Grant' given to the CPCA.**
- **The mechanism for allocation of the Transport Grant is yet to be considered by the CPCA board but that any scheme delivered via the Transport Grant may require approval via the CPCA Transport Committee and board.**
- **Officers are currently working on proposals for the junction as part of the 2027/2028 Transport Grant for potential funding**
- **The Humphries Way junction improvements should score highly in any prioritisation due to the quantity of developer contributions available**

This Council accepts:

- residents' concerns and the poor track record of collisions on the A10 corridor from Ely to Cambridge and area around Waterbeach and Milton in particular. These works should not be delayed further

This Council resolves to:

- **ask the CPCA to consider allocate allocation of funding from the Road Safety Small Capital Projects and the Delivering Transport Strategy Aims Programme (or successor funds) to this project**
- **write to the Combined Authority asking them to prioritise Humphries Way junction improvements as part of their A10 improvement scheme**
- ~~further allocate funding to this project from the £20m capital pot approved at the meeting of Full Council on 10 February 2026 for 2027/28 as part of the 2026-31 business plan~~
- **If the scheme is unable to be funded via the CPCA or developer contributions, investigate what other capital funding will be used to ensure the council meets it's legal obligations with regards to Humphries Way.**
- bring a report to the ~~next meeting of the~~ Highways and Transport Committee **by 1st September 2026** updating the committee on ~~this decision~~ **funding options and progress for Humphries Way**, including a date by which works ~~will~~ **could start in order to meet the Council's legal obligations.**

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

[Voting pattern: Liberal Democrat/Independent, Labour and Greens in favour; Conservatives and Reform UK against]

c) Motion from Councillor Edna Murphy

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Murphy and seconded by Councillor Caine.

This Council notes:

- The Home Secretary is planning to merge the 43 police constabularies of England and Wales into a smaller number of larger regional forces.
- The need for strong, visible, community-based policing and with local accountability being essential.
- Evidence that local policing builds trust and confidence locally, improves crime prevention, and ensures responsiveness to community needs.
- Police forces already achieve economies of scale through joint procurement of vehicles, shared ICT systems, and collaborative cross-border operations to tackle issues such as county lines drug dealing.

This Council believes:

- Merging police forces into “mega-forces” would weaken local accountability and reduce the visibility of officers in our communities.
- Investment should focus on modernising technology, improving data sharing, and strengthening community policing—not structural mergers.

This Council resolves to:

- Oppose any proposals to merge our local police force into a regional or national entity.
- Call on the Government to prioritise:
 - o Increased funding for community policing teams.
 - o National standards for vetting and technology upgrades to improve efficiency.
 - o Enhanced rural crime support and local police desks in community hubs.
- Ask the Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary and local MPs to express this Council’s opposition to force mergers and support for local policing responsive to the local community and its needs.

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

[Voting pattern: Liberal Democrat/Independent, Conservatives, Reform UK and Greens in favour; Labour against]

d) Motion from Councillor Geoff Seeff

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Seeff and seconded by Councillor Damary-Homan.

This Council notes that:

- In response to the announcement by the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) on 14th January 2026 seeking competitive bids for towns across the UK to be named as the UK Town of Culture 2028, expressions of interest (EOIs) for the towns of St Neots and Huntingdon were submitted by the Neotists Community Interest Company and Huntingdon Business Improvement District (BID)/Huntingdon Town Council respectively.
- On the basis of the EOIs, the DCMS will draw up a shortlist of towns which it wishes to take full bids forward and the Accountable Bodies of each of the towns selected will receive a grant of £60,000 towards the preparatory work. A decision will be made on shortlisting in late spring 2026.
- Full bids are to be submitted by Autumn 2026 and, following an evaluation process, the nomination will be made in early 2027.
- The nominated town will receive DCMS funding of £3 million towards the costs of presenting a 12-month programme of cultural activities and two runners up will each receive funding of £250,000 for less ambitious programmes.

This Council understands that:

- The definition of Culture for the purposes of this Government initiative is very broad. It embraces all the genres of the professional and amateur performing and visual arts but also includes inter alia local history, literature, architecture, crafts, gardens and nature. In short, any aspect of a town's life that gives it its vibrancy and is potentially of interest to residents and prospective visitors.
- If shortlisted either or both organisations will take responsibility for or form a Delivery Body, in terms of the process, to take responsibility for the bid preparation. If nominated the Delivery Body will take responsibility for the delivery of the planned programme.
- If shortlisted, there will be benefits to the organisations in submitting a full bid in that it will bring together the various sections of their local communities to collaborate in a common cause and help them identify cultural needs and generate new ideas for cultural development outside the competition.
- If ultimately successful in the competition and the delivery of the programme is well managed, the potential benefits to the nominated town are immeasurable. It is to be expected that, where appropriate, additional funding will be leveraged from private sector partners participating in some of the projects, there will be additional employment opportunities for artists and those associated with events, the local visitor economy will experience growth and there will be a permanent legacy of enhanced facilities and civic pride.

Accordingly, the Council resolves to:

- if shortlisted, offer support with preparatory works, including the offering of physical facilities in the St Neots and Huntingdon libraries for meetings and research, including

access to the archives, and to make available access to officers with expertise and information in the relevant fields that would assist their submissions.

- channel any requests for support through the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, and offer to appoint one Elected Member to liaise with the Delivery Body for St Neots and one Elected Member to liaise with the Delivery Body for Huntingdon, with substitutes to be permitted.
- further provide such support as required and within the competence of the Council if either St Neots or Huntingdon is awarded the title of UK Town of Culture 2028.

Following discussion, the motion was carried unanimously by general consensus.

e) Motion from Bryony Goodliffe

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Goodliffe and seconded by Councillor Meschini.

This Council notes:

- that there are around 25,000 children in Cambridgeshire who qualify for the support from Pupil Premium (also known as free school meals) and many of these children are living in poverty, struggling following years of austerity and the Cost of-living crisis. Pupil Premium funding entitles a child or young person to a free school lunch during term time and additional funds to support their education to help reduce the attainment gap of children and young people living in poverty.
- Cambridgeshire County Council has shown its commitment to assisting families who have an extremely low income through a very successful voucher programme which gave those families entitled to Pupil Premium funding vouchers for major supermarkets during each full week of school holidays.
- that a report to Children and Young People Committee in 2023 showed the value of these vouchers and that comments from recipients indicates the great need for the support the voucher scheme has offered their children and young people.
- that in May 2025, the Cambridgeshire independent poverty strategy commission report was published, and a countywide multi-agency officer delivery group subsequently established to address the recommendations.

This Council resolves:

- to request that the Anti-Poverty Strategic Lead officer and the poverty strategy delivery group consider funding for an ongoing holiday voucher scheme for families who experience financial shock (as set out in the Crisis and Resilience Fund guidance) within the CRF delivery plan.
- to use a proportion of the £5.3million pa Crisis and Resilience Fund allocation, subject to approval by Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, to pay for the scheme which should begin in the autumn of 2026 and last for the duration of the local government settlement, reviewed in line with DWP national guidance.
- that this scheme is prioritised in the use of Crisis and Resilience Fund due to the lifelong impact of growing up in poverty on children and the impact it can have upon their physical health, mental health, educational attainment and life chances.

- that a scheme is considered which is cost effective, value for money and can be communicated to the majority of families who qualify for Pupil Premium and live within Cambridgeshire County Council boundaries.
- that financial management and prevention advice are also offered to these families upon receipt of support.
- that updates regarding this Motion should be provided to Spokes of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee.

Councillor A Whelan moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Murphy, as follows (additions in bold and deletions in strikethrough):

This Council notes:

- that ~~there are~~ around 25,000 children in Cambridgeshire ~~who qualify for the support from Pupil Premium~~ **support**, ~~(also known as free school meals)~~ and many of these children are living in **reflecting the continued impact of poverty and the**, ~~struggling following years of austerity and the~~ **cost-of-living crisis on many families**. Pupil Premium funding entitles a child or young person to a free school lunch during term time and additional funds to support their education to help reduce the attainment gap of children and young people living in poverty.
- **that** Cambridgeshire County Council has shown its commitment to assisting families who have an extremely low income through a very successful **holiday supermarket voucher scheme funded through the Government's Household Support Fund**, ~~programme which gave these~~ **providing direct assistance** to families entitled to Pupil Premium funding vouchers for major supermarkets during each full week of school holidays.
- **that councils had previously been able to provide holiday voucher schemes through the Household Support Fund but that the new Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) guidance issued by the Labour Government does not allow the use of blanket voucher schemes.**
- ~~— that a report to Children and Young People Committee in 2023 showed the value of these vouchers and that comments from recipients indicates the great need for the support the voucher scheme has offered their children and young people.~~
- that in May 2025, the Cambridgeshire independent poverty strategy commission report was published, and a countywide multi-agency officer delivery group subsequently established to address the recommendations.
- **that the Labour Government guidance for the Crisis and Resilience Fund requires local authorities to prioritise targeted support for households experiencing a financial shock and to focus on building financial resilience, rather than providing universal cost-of-living payments.**
- **that the requirement for case by case assessments limit councils' ability to continue the broad or blanket holiday voucher schemes previously funded under the Household Support Fund.**
- **that the Equality Impact Assessment produced by this Council dated 9th January 2026 highlights the negative impact of the Labour Governments actions in removing the holiday meal voucher scheme funding.**

- that councils across the country are now having to redesign their support schemes to comply with the Labour Government's revised rules, including the expansion of the free school meals programme and the Holiday Activities & Food and the removal of the two-child benefit cap changing the number of families in financial crisis.

This Council believes:

- that no child in Cambridgeshire should go hungry during school holidays.
- that families facing financial hardship should continue to receive support from the County Council.
- that the Labour Government have failed those in most need by removing holiday meal support.
- that the Government should provide sufficient and flexible funding to allow councils to support families effectively during school holidays.

This Council resolves:

- to request that the Anti-Poverty Strategic Lead officer and the poverty strategy delivery group **explores ways to provide targeted holiday support including** considering funding for an ongoing holiday voucher scheme for families who experience financial shock (as set out in the Crisis and Resilience Fund guidance) within the CRF delivery plan **and subject to the rules of the CRF funding.**
- to use a proportion of the £5.3million pa Crisis and Resilience Fund allocation, subject to approval by Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, to **prioritise support for children and families facing financial shocks, including access to food support during school holidays where this meets the CRF eligibility criteria and if a holiday voucher scheme is agreed** to pay for the scheme which should begin in the autumn of 2026 and last for the duration of the local government settlement, ~~reviewed in line with DWP national guidance.~~
- that this scheme, **if agreed**, is prioritised in the use of Crisis and Resilience Fund due to **recognising** the lifelong impact **on children** of growing up in poverty ~~on children~~ and the impact it can have upon their physical health, **and** mental health, educational attainment and life chances.
- that a scheme is considered which **provides** cost effective, value for money **support for those families facing financial shock in accordance with CRF eligibility** ~~and that~~ can be communicated to ~~the majority of those~~ families who qualify for Pupil Premium and live within Cambridgeshire County Council boundaries.
- that financial management and prevention advice are **integrated into any such scheme to provide financial resilience support, including access to advice on benefits, debt and financial management in accordance with the CRF scheme.** ~~also offered to these families upon receipt of support.~~
- to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions requesting that the Government provide sufficient funding to enable councils to continue supporting families during school holidays.

- that updates regarding this Motion should be provided to Spokes of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee.

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

[Voting pattern: Liberal Democrat/Independent and 1 Reform UK in favour; Conservatives, Labour and 7 Reform UK against; Greens abstained]

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

[Voting pattern: Liberal Democrat/Independent and 1 Green in favour; 5 Conservatives and 2 Reform UK against; Labour, 6 Reform UK, 1 Conservative and 1 Green abstained]

69. Questions

- a) Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Council Procedure Rule 10.1)

One question was submitted under Council Procedure Rule 10.1 of the Council's Constitution, as set out in Appendix F.

- b) Questions on Fire Authority Issues

Two questions were received, as set out in Appendix G.

- c) Written Questions (Council Procedure Rule 10.4)

No questions were submitted under Council Procedure Rule 9.2

Chair

County Council – 17 March 2026

Chair's Announcements

People

Luke Venni

It is with deep regret that the Chair reports the recent death of Luke Venni, Strategic HR Business Partner, in the Office of the Chief Executive. The Council's thoughts are with his family, friends and colleagues at this very sad time.

Gen (Genevieve) Ray

It is also with deep regret that the Chair reports the recent death of Gen (Genevieve) Ray, Job Coach, Additional Needs Team, in the Children, Education and Families Directorate. The Council's thoughts are with her family, friends and colleagues at this very sad time.

Executive Director of Place and Sustainability

Following final interviews led by the members of the Staffing and Service Appeals Committee on 4 March 2026, members unanimously agreed to appoint Graeme Kane to the substantive position of Executive Director of Place and Sustainability. Graeme currently works for North Northamptonshire Council as Corporate Director – Highways, Waste, Regeneration and Growth, overseeing a portfolio of services including highways, transport, waste services, economic development, development management and planning policy.

During 2023-24, Graeme was the interim Executive Director of Place and Economy for North Northamptonshire and, prior to the formation of the new unitary council, held the same Executive Director role with the former Northamptonshire County Council. With previous experience in district, county and unitary authorities, Graeme has a strong leadership background with place-based services. In addition to this wide-ranging experience, Graeme has direct experience of leading councils through Local Government Reorganisation and in the formation of new unitary authorities.

Graeme is expected to join the authority in early June, and in the intervening period, Lee Harris will continue to fulfil the role of Executive Director of Place and Sustainability on an interim basis.

Service Developments

World Social Work Day

World Social Work Day will take place on 17 March, celebrating the vital contribution of social workers and the positive impact they have on individuals, families and communities. This year will focus on Co-Building Hope and Harmony: A Harambee Call to Unite a Divided Society, and highlights how social work brings people together across societies and systems to shape a more inclusive and sustainable tomorrow.

National Measles Vaccination Campaign

The Public Health team is working to support the National Measles Vaccination Campaign. Whilst we don't currently have any outbreaks locally, the situation in North London demonstrates that we should be prepared for this possibility. The best way to protect the young and the vulnerable against

dangerous complications from measles, is to make sure they are vaccinated. Missed measles vaccination can be caught up for free by contacting your GP, whatever the age of the child.

Messages

Meeting to discuss Covid-19 National Day of Reflection

The Chair met with Chief Executive, Dr Stephen Moir and Head of Comms, Matthew Hall to discuss Covid National Day of Reflection.

Ukraine Flag Raising

The Chair raised the Ukraine flag to mark the anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 accompanied by Deputy Lieutenant, Mr Chris Parkhouse DL, Chief Executive, Dr Stephen Moir and other Cambridgeshire County colleagues at New Shire Hall.

St David's Day Flag Raising

The Chair raised the St David's Day Flag accompanied by Deputy Lieutenant, Mr Chris Parkhouse DL, Chief Executive, Dr Stephen Moir and other Cambridgeshire County colleagues at New Shire Hall.

Huntingdon's Pancake Flipathon

The Vice-Chair attended Huntingdon Town Council's annual pancake flipathon on the Market Square in Huntingdon and won the first place medal.

Covid-19 National Day of Reflection

The Chair marked the Covid-19 National Day of Reflection with pupils from Fulbourn primary school at Memory Wood, Fulbourn, to reflect on the pandemics' impact and remember the resilience shown by all those across Cambridgeshire.

Spotlight Awards

The Chair attended our Cambridgeshire County Council Spotlight Awards at The Cambridge Belfry and announced the Members Choice Awards and the Special Recognition Awards alongside Dr Stephen Moir and Leader of the Council, Councillor Lucy Nethsingha.

Community Multi-Cultural Iftar

The Chair attended the Community Multi-Cultural Iftar in the Guildhall, Cambridge. This was a special event designed to bring together people from diverse backgrounds, cultures and faiths in the spirit of unity and understanding during the holy month of Ramadan.

The Formal Installation of the Chancellor in the Senate-House

The Chair attended the formal installation of the new Chancellor of Cambridge, Chancellor Lord Smith at the Congregation in the Senate-House. Mrs Julie Spence OBE CStJ QPM, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, was also in attendance.

Citizenship Ceremonies

The Chair attended 6 Citizenship Ceremonies at New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald.

Public Question Time

1. Question from Dr Liz Robin to the Chair of the Children and Young People Committee, Councillor Edna Murphy:

So right now in Cambridgeshire, low-income families struggling with the cost of living get free school meals for their children and supermarket vouchers funded by the Council to pay for their children's meals in the holidays. The voucher scheme is a local one, not mandated nationally, but the Council chose to use the Household Support Fund to fund it. So, this Council is planning to stop the holiday voucher scheme from September because the National Housing Support Grant has been replaced by the National Crisis and Resilience Fund, or CRF. The reason this Council gives is that the CRF cannot be used to fund holiday vouchers. But national CRF guidance only uses the words 'may not' which could mean either 'must not' or 'might not'. To clarify this, Cambridge MP Daniel Zeichner raised a query with the DWP via the Minister and received a written response. The DWP response states that the Crisis and Resilience Fund guidance does not prohibit the use of vouchers for children eligible for free school meals and specifically states that blanket voucher schemes are not prohibited. There are caveats, new processes and challenges included in both the DWP response and the CRF guidance, but nothing to say that a holiday voucher scheme cannot continue, providing the Council can justify it. So my question is, why has this Council publicly announced the end of the holiday voucher scheme, which is a lifeline for so many struggling local families, when it's clear from both a careful reading of the CRF guidance itself, and from the DWP's response to our local MP that there is local discretion for the voucher scheme to continue, providing some new processes are put in place.

Response from the Chair of the Children and Young People Committee, Councillor Edna Murphy:

Thank you for raising your question. Under the Household Support Fund, the Council was able to support children on free school meals with holiday food vouchers and being entitled to free school meals automatically entitled them to the holiday food vouchers. There was no other assessment required. The Government, as you have pointed out, has stopped the Household Support Fund with effect from the end of this month. The replacement of the Crisis and Resilience Fund has a very different approach to the provision of vouchers, as it does not allow this kind of blanket voucher approach to be used.

It is explicit in Section 44 of the guidance, which you have partially quoted. Families with children, Section 44 'Authorities should use their discretion to prioritise funding efficiently within their own CRF schemes, including when considering how best to support families in crisis to ensure the poorest children do not go hungry in the school holidays. This may not be through the blanket provision of vouchers to those on free school meals as we recognise that some free school meal eligible families may not routinely need crisis support during every school holiday.'

The CRF therefore requires case by case assessment and a determination of need for individuals or families within the terms of the fund itself. There will be things the Council can do and holiday food vouchers in individual cases may be considered, but not blanket schemes.

You have said the guidance on which we based our decision was ambiguous in your written note, but this is not correct, it is clear. You've also said that there's evidence from the DWP that the Council's interpretation is incorrect. This is not so. If you're referring, you referred to some correspondence, and if it's the same one I've seen, it actually confirms our view.

Supplementary question from Dr Liz Robin to the Chair of the Children and Young People Committee, Councillor Edna Murphy:

Okay, so just in response, you quoted the guidance with the word 'may', and it can mean either must or might. You didn't really address that point. I'd also say that with respect, we're talking about two interpretations of the CRF guidance here, the Council's interpretation, which is that the DWP won't allow you to use the CRF for a holiday voucher scheme and the DWP's interpretation of their own guidance sent in writing to our local MP via the Minister. Now if you want to implement a holiday voucher scheme and the DWP reply did say it could be a blanket scheme, providing certain criteria are met. If you want to continue the holiday voucher scheme, you should be welcoming with open arms a letter from the DWP via the Minister that says you can do it if you put the right processes in place. I cannot understand why you are not welcoming this having said previously that you wish the scheme to continue.

Response from the Chair of the Children and Young People Committee, Councillor Edna Murphy:

So I have seen this correspondence and it does actually confirm the view that blanket schemes are not allowed and in any event, the Council must adhere to the official guidance, not from third hand anonymous emails from persons unknown, because the letter I saw was redacted.

In addition, the advice from all our officers is also clear and we must adhere to such official guidance and advice, or we will be acting unlawfully. I hope you understand that.

The Household Support Fund provided more money than the CRF does and that's why we were so concerned that families would experience a cliff edge. We invested an additional £2.7 million pounds to sustain a level of support to families in receipt of free school meals as we transition to the upcoming Crisis and Resilience Fund arrangements. This approach allows both time and capacity to invest in both an application-based crisis payment scheme and resilience services, which will have the potential to benefit all residents on low incomes or experiencing financial shock, including families.

2. Question from Councillor Paul Bearpark, the South Cambridgeshire District Councillor for Milton and Waterbeach Ward, to the Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee, Councillor Alex Beckett:

Thank you, Chair. Good morning everyone, my name is Paul Bearpark. I am the ward Member for Milton and Waterbeach, representing Waterbeach New Town, Waterbeach and Milton and Landbeach villages and Chittering.

I have a question about the first item, the first motion on your agenda today, which is about Humphreys Way junction on the A10. This junction was due for upgrade. It was part of the Section 106 agreement for Waterbeach New Town, the trigger point was 300 occupations, and that is approaching rapidly. My understanding is the cost of the scheme have risen, so I'd like to ask the Chair of Transport and Highways Committee to outline what he believes to be the best way to resolve the issues at Humphreys Way junction on the A10 to bring the scheme forward.

Thank you.

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

Thank you very much, Councillor Bearpark. As I'm sure you're aware, there is a motion to this Council today on this one and we also have a petition being brought. But I do want to take a moment firstly to thank you and Councillor Bradnam for the work that you have been doing behind the scenes in bringing this to our attention over a very long period of time. I think that work is what has allowed us to get to a place today where we hopefully, and I don't want to predetermine things, that might be able to approve the motion. Now, officers have previously been working up this junction for delivery and looking at the available options. As I say, the motion coming later on, I've been working with Elisa and I hope we have now got a second recommendations that we'll be able to approve subject to the agreement of this Council. Those recommendations I do believe are the best way forward and it will involve looking at this junction, continuing that work and then making sure that it is correctly prioritised through the process for hopeful funding.

You're obviously also aware that the Combined Authority is looking at works in this area to improve the A10. Now, there are a number of different options on the table, but I do hope that one of those options, which is junction improvements, will come forward because there are so many junctions on the A10 like this that do need work, and that is something that could be delivered relatively swiftly if the Combined Authority were to make that decision. I do believe that is affordable as well. So I believe this motion going forward does give us a good plan for delivery, but also I hope that the Mayor will be, and the Combined Authority, will be looking at the wider A10 and junction improvements there.

Supplementary question from Councillor Bearpark to the Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee, Councillor Alex Beckett:

I don't have a supplementary. I'd just like to, yeah, just agree with what you said about the Combined Authority bringing forward these works on the A10. So, I looked at the figures between Streatham and the A14 junction, over the past three years, there have been 36 severe injuries resulting from incidents on that bit of stretch of road. There have been 4 fatalities, and I think for the Combined Authority to bring those improvements forward as soon as possible. So, I thank you very much for that.

Petition

Petition titled 'Improve safety at the Humpries Way Junction on the A10 near Cambridge.'

Statement from Ms Elizabeth McWilliams

Thank you, Chair. Almost exactly two years ago, on 13 April 2024, there were two serious crashes in one day, a total of four casualties, at the Humphreys Way junction with Milton and Landbeach on the A10. As if that were not bad enough, only two weeks later there was another serious accident with two casualties. That month, Landbeach Parish Council held its annual parish meeting with the then Mayor of the Combined Authority, Dr Nik Johnson, as our speaker. At the Q and A, the first question was a demand for someone to do something about that junction.

This is a junction with such confused priority particularly for those leaving Milton to go north up the A10, that regular arguments can be seen on the village Facebook page over who has right of way. And it impacts not just Milton and Landbeach residents, but those in Cottenham who travel through Landbeach to the A10, those in Water Beach and all the villages up to and beyond Ely who drive past it.

I created a survey asking for people's experiences at the junction which had 265 responses. Of those, 93% claim to have experienced problems at this junction and 56% tend to have witnessed incidents there. I'd like to share just a few of the comments respondents left. 'Even after clear road markings, drivers seem doubtful of who has priority. This often leads to drivers from Milton moving into the central area to join the A10 Landbeach road with other cars joining next to you, blocking the view from oncoming traffic from the left, leaving drivers to take a risk moving out as visibility is poor.' 'I dread using the junction as it feels like I'm taking my life in my hands. It's fine to argue about who was right or wrong after each and every new accident until someone dies.' 'We've now given up using this junction as it's far too risky and dangerous. I've witnessed accidents here and have a near miss myself.' 'This junction is a death trap. Why are we waiting for more accidents and potential deaths until action is taken? Only a matter of time before a fatality occurs. It's so depressing hearing the frequency of sirens attending this junction.'

It is true that a planning agreement between South Cambs and the Waterbeach New Town developer exists, obliging the developer to pay to implement signalization to mitigate increased road use, triggered at 250 occupations and to be delivered by 300. But not only is that some way off, the obligation is only around capacity and not around safety. And with that in mind, I'm presenting this petition signed by over 600 people, asking the Council to bring forward these works, to find ways to plug any funding gap and to make it safer sooner.

Right now, from in the Chamber, you can only see me on the big screen, but there are 606 of us here begging you to do something now before there is a fatality. Thank you.

Agenda Item No. 7 - Constitution and Ethics Committee Recommendations –
Proposed Changes to the Constitution

Proposed by Councillor Howitt

Seconded by Councillor Bywater

Additions in bold and deletions shown in strikethrough

- (i) The removal of the limit on the number of motions at a Council meeting;
- (ii) The introduction of a total debate time for motions; ~~and~~
- (iii) An amendment to the scope of motions, requiring them to only be about matters for which the Council has a responsibility; **and**

(iv) An additional provision to provide the Chair with discretion to accept or prioritise urgent motions, as follows:

- 12.1 Except for motions which can be moved without notice under Rule 13, written or electronic notice of motions for discussion at Council meetings, excluding extraordinary or special meetings and the annual budget meeting of the Council or the first annual meeting of a new Council, must be delivered to the proper officer not later than 12.00 noon 14 days before the date of the meeting. **The Chair may accept a late motion if they consider it to be urgent.** The proper officer will maintain a public record of all motions submitted. Any councillor may give notice of not more than one motion for consideration at any ordinary meeting.

Agenda Item No. 7 - Constitution and Ethics Committee Recommendations –
Proposed Changes to the Constitution

Proposed by Councillor Howitt

Seconded by Councillor Wells

Additions in bold and deletions shown in strikethrough

- (i) ~~The removal of~~ **An amendment to the current** limit on the number of motions at a Council meeting **as follows:**

12.2 Other than at the annual budget meeting, for which no notices of motions shall be accepted, a maximum of ~~five~~ **three** motions **proposed by the administration and a maximum of one motion each proposed by all other groups** shall be accepted for debate at an ordinary meeting of the Council under this standing order. **The Monitoring Officer may amend the number of motions for individual groups to reflect any significant changes to political proportionality, if considered appropriate.;** and

- ~~(ii) The introduction of a total debate time for motions; and~~

- (iii) An amendment to the scope of motions, requiring them to only be about matters for which the Council has a responsibility.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Council Procedure Rule 10.1)

Questions to the Council's Appointees on the Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor A Whelan and Councillor Wyatt.

Question from Councillor L Beckett to the Council's Appointees on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor A Whelan and Councillor Wyatt:

Thank you, Chair. On the 14th of January, the CPCA attempted to proceed with proposals to withdraw or alter several county bus services without any prior consultation with local county, district or parish councillors, or the people who actually use these routes. One of the services affected was the number 65 between Buckden and St. Neots. I welcome Councillor Alex Beckett's diligence in ensuring that the CPCA agrees to consult residents before making its changes. But two months on, there have been no further communication while residents in Buckden, the Offords and Great Paxton continue to tell us how vital this service is. The CPCA's claim that the service averages only 2.5 passengers is almost certainly based on flawed data. It includes the first return journey from St. Neots to the villages. But the first inbound bus doesn't arrive in St. Neots until 10.08, and the next return leaves at 10.25. That gives residents just 17 minutes in town. Of course, hardly anyone uses that return service, and a proper assessment should now be based on usable journeys, not those that are impossible for residents to make. If they did that, they'd find that this is a popular service. As this is more than a transport link, sorry, and this is more than a transport link. Several residents have contacted Councillor Caine, Parish Councillor Stephen Claffey and myself to say that this bus service has over the years facilitated a very tight knit community. One resident told us plainly that without this service they would not see anyone on a weekly basis.

So I'm asking the Scrutiny Members to join me, Councillor Caine and the parish councils of Buckden, Offord and Great Paxton in pressing the CPCA to assess the social impact of withdrawing these services, including isolation, access to health care and the consequences for older and less mobile residents alongside the financial case, pause any withdrawals until a full documented local consultation and social impact assessment are completed, and publish a clear timetable for that consultation to happen, and commit to meeting parish councils, local members and regular bus users.

Response from the Council's Appointee on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Wyatt:

Thanks, Liam. As the Local Member for the other end of that bus service, I've also had similar requests from residents, actually. I understand that there is a CPCA Board meeting tomorrow where hopefully this will be discussed, but either way, I will make sure to raise it at our next Overview and Scrutiny Committee because you're absolutely right we need to defend these populations and communities. Thank you.

Supplementary question from Councillor L Beckett to the Council's Appointees on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor A Whelan and Councillor Wyatt:

The current timetable often gives residents only a two-hour window in St Neots at the best times. That's not enough for time for shopping, lunch, appointments, or meeting friends. It forces a very early travel or missed trips altogether and a low-cost alternative does exist. Simply extending the operating window so that return journeys run one or two hours later without actually increasing the frequency of buses would preserve vehicle hours while dramatically improving usefulness. Can I ask that the scrutiny members examine whether the CPCA has modelled the cost and timetable implications of extending the operating window rather than increasing frequency, and whether it will commit to a short, locally developed trial with parish councils and regular users to test whether later return times improve access to services.

Response from the Council's Appointee on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Wyatt:

Yes, I think that's a great idea. I'll definitely make sure that gets suggested. Thanks, Liam.

Questions on Fire Authority Issues

Questions to the Chair of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority, Councillor Morris.

Question from Councillor Bywater to the Chair of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority, Councillor Morris:

It's not really a comment, it's just a question to the Chairman of the Fire Authority and I thank his engagement. I really enjoy being on the Fire Authority and I share, I'm sure I share the comments from other Members, but Members might be aware that through the press yesterday that our neighbouring fire service, Bedfordshire, has been the victim of thefts of substantial equipment, and given that we've got a huge amount of retained fire stations within the county, can you give us assurances that we're protecting those assets and, you know, we don't run that risk of having similar thefts. They are expensive pieces of equipment that are going missing, really, so I just want that assurance, really.

Response from the Chair of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority, Councillor Morris:

Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Councillor Bywater. Certainly, it is something of the utmost concern to the Service and to the Authority and something we will be reviewing in the very near term. So thank you for raising it.

Question from Councillor Hathorn to the Chair of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority, Councillor Morris:

If I'm not allowed to ask this question, please just advise. So, the recent fire in Glasgow was, by the train station, was very concerning. I am aware that there is a vape shop in a block of flats in one of the places which I represent and, I don't expect there to be an answer today, but I imagine a lot of people are, a lot of councillors are, concerned about this type of situation. It would be good to hear back from the Fire Authority. I guess, are there additional, you know, is there anything extra we should be doing as councillors to make sure that these the risks are known and that these buildings are absolutely top priority to have good fire safety precautions.

Response from the Chair of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority, Councillor Morris:

Thank you very much, Chair. The Fire Service conducted, I think, more than 400 business visits last year, including to sites with particular risk profiles. But absolutely, that is a particular area of concern. I'm happy to take away and make sure there's an appropriate mitigation plan for. Thank you.