

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held on
Thursday, 5 October 2023 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Peter Fane – Chair
Councillor Peter Sandford – Vice-Chair

Councillors: Michael Atkins, Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Tom Bygott, Ariel Cahn, Dr. Martin Cahn, Graham Cone, Stephen Drew, Sue Ellington, Bill Handley, Sunita Hansraj, Sally Ann Hart, Geoff Harvey, Dr. Tumi Hawkins, James Hobro, Carla Hofman, Mark Howell, Helene Leeming, Daniel Lentell, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Lina Nieto, Annika Osborne, Bridget Smith, Richard Stobart, Bunty Waters, Heather Williams, John Williams and Dr. Richard Williams

Councillor Cllr Dr Lisa Redrup was in attendance remotely.

Officers:	Andrew Francis	Elections and Democratic Services Manager
	John Murphy	Monitoring Officer
	Pippa Turvey	Democratic Services Team Leader
	Liz Watts	Chief Executive

1. Apologies

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Dr Shrobona Bhattacharya, Libby Earle, Corinne Garvie, Jose Hales, Pippa Heylings, William Jackson-Wood, Judith Rippeth, Dr Susan van de Ven, Dr Aiden Van de Weyer, Natalie Warren-Green and Eileen Wilson. Councillor Dr Lisa Redrup attended the meeting online.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Heather Williams declared an Other Registerable Interest as a member of the Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint Assembly.

3. Register of Interests

The Chair reminded Members that Democratic Services should be informed of any changes to their Register of Members' Financial and Other Interests form.

4. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023 were agreed as a correct record by affirmation, subject to the removal of the duplicated Apologies minute.

5 (a) Announcements from the Chair

The Chair welcomed Pippa Turvey, Democratic Services Team Leader, to her first meeting of Council.

The Chair announced that next year would be the Council's 50th anniversary and he proposed that the Civic Affairs Committee consider how this event should be commemorated.

The Chair announced that Councillor Sue Ellington had been Chair of the Council from 2015-17 and had not received the commemorative badge that all former Chairs were entitled to. The Chair presented Councillor Sue Ellington with her badge.

5 (b) Announcements from the Leader and Cabinet

The Leader announced that the Council had been achieved Bronze accreditation as a Carbon Literate Organisation by the Carbon Literacy Trust. The Leader, Deputy Leader and Lead Cabinet Member for Business Development had attended the SME Businesses award run by the Cambridge Independent newspaper. 22 small businesses from South Cambridgeshire had been nominated and seven had won an award. The innovation award, sponsored by the Council, had been won by Welch's Transport from Duxford. The Council continued to support local businesses.

5 (c) Announcements from the Head of Paid Service

The Chief Executive made no announcements.

6. Questions From the Public

A question had been received from a member of the public who was not in attendance. A written response would be provided.

7. Petitions

No petitions were received.

8. To Consider the Following Recommendation:**8 (a) Independent Members of Audit & Corporate Governance Committee (Civic Affairs Committee, 13 July 2023)**

The Chair explained that as he was the Chair of the Civic Affairs Committee he would be presenting this report, which recommended the appointment of an Independent member of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.

Councillor Stephen Drew proposed that the recommendation that the Independent Person be on the electoral roll should be amended to simply require

them to be a resident of Cambridgeshire. Councillor Richard Stobart seconded this amendment.

Councillor Heather Williams expressed her disappointment in the proposed amendment, as the recommendation from the Civic Affairs Committee had enjoyed cross-party support. A resident could have two homes and so the amendment made the connection with the area weaker than being on the electoral roll.

Councillor Mark Howell explained that the Civic Affairs Committee had recommended that the candidate be on the electoral roll as this would ensure that the Independent Person would have a vested interest in the area. He warned that the term resident was not clearly defined.

Councillor Stephen Drew stated that being on the electoral roll was exclusionary as residents had a right to opt to not be on the roll. Councillor John Williams explained that being on the electoral roll did not mean a permanent address in Cambridgeshire, as a person could have two homes.

Councillor Daniel Lentell suggested that being on the Council Tax register or providing a utility bill could be used to demonstrate local residency instead of relying on the electoral roll.

Councillor Dr Richard Williams requested that those recommending the amendment provide a definition of a resident to avoid future legal challenges. Councillor Richard Stobart explained that the recruitment of the Independent Person would be officer led.

A vote was held on the proposed amendment and were cast as follows:

In favour (21):

Councillors Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Anna Bradnam, Dr Martin Cahn, Stephen Drew, Peter Fane, Bill Handley, Sunita Hansraj, Sally Ann Hart, Geoff Harvey, Dr Tumi Hawkins, Dr James Hobro, Carla Homan, Helene Leeming, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Annika Osborne, Peter Sandford, Bridget Smith, Richard Stobart and John Williams

Against (9):

Councillors Paul Bearpark, Tom Bygott, Graham Cone, Sue Ellington, Mark Howell, Lina Nieto, Bunty Waters, Dr Richard Williams and Heather Williams.

Abstain (3):

Councillors Michael Atkins, Ariel Cahn and Daniel Lentell.

The amendment was **agreed**.

Councillor Heather Williams proposed an amendment to the new recommendation to include a legal definition of the word "resident" so that it would be clear who was able to apply for the position. Councillor Dr Richard Williams seconded this proposal, as he considered the word resident to be too

vague and so it was vital that a clear definition was provided. The Chair proposed that the Council's officers provide a definition of resident, which would then be confirmed by the Civic Affairs Committee. The amendment was agreed by affirmation.

Councillor Heather Williams stated that she had supported the original recommendation and as her view had not changed she would vote against the amended recommendation.

Councillor Michael Atkins, Chair of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee, explained that there was an expectation from CIPFA that the Committee would have independent members and he hoped that their appointment would complement the good work already being done by the Committee.

The Chair proposed and Councillor Michael Atkins seconded the amended recommendation. A vote was taken and were cast as follows:

In favour (24):

Councillors Michael Atkins, Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Stephen Drew, Peter Fane, Bill Handley, Sunita Hansraj, Sally Ann Hart, Geoff Harvey, Dr Tumi Hawkins, Dr James Hobro, Carla Homan, Helene Leeming, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Annika Osborne, Peter Sandford, Bridget Smith, Richard Stobart and John Williams

Against (8):

Councillors Tom Bygott, Graham Cone, Sue Ellington, Mark Howell, Lina Nieto, Bunty Waters, Dr Richard Williams and Heather Williams.

Abstain (1):

Councillors Daniel Lentell.

Council

Agreed to change the Constitution to allow the appointment of an Independent Member to the Audit and Corporate Committee, noting that they should:

- A)** Not have voting rights;
- B)** Be a resident within the Cambridgeshire area, the word resident to be defined by officers and approved by the Civic Affairs Committee; and
- C)** The recruitment process to be delegated to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.

8 (b) Young People's Task and Finish Group Report from Scrutiny (Cabinet, 28 September 2023)

Councillor Bill Handley presented this report, which summarised the work carried out and the conclusions reached by the Young People Task and Finish Group. It

detailed the recommendations approved by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and endorsed, with a few amendments, by Cabinet on 28 September 2023. Councillor Bill Handley thanked the Task and Finish Group for their work, which had been unanimously supported by Cabinet.

Councillor Richard Stobart explained that the Task and Finish Group had been set up following last year's motion agreed by Council. The Group had decided to define young people as those aged from 11 to 25, from secondary education to those starting out on their careers. Mental health and depression in young people had been a major concern, as had absence from school during the Covid-19 pandemic. There had been an eagerness to participate in the democratic process and it had been agreed that the Council should ask an educational institution to host a meeting of the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee. He thanked officers for their support of the work of the Group.

Councillor Graham Cone, Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, endorsed the report and thanked the Task and Finish Group for their work.

Councillor Daniel Lentell noted that Village Colleges would be contacted regarding the elections process and he requested that other secondary schools be included. Councillor Richard Stobart supported this, as there had been no intention of the Task and Finish Group to exclude other secondary schools.

Councillor Heather Williams stated that her motion of September 2019 had been rejected but then a similar motion had been approved last year. She hoped that those who had voted against her motion in 2019 would not repeat their mistake and the Council would act to benefit future generations.

Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins announced that youth engagement was a priority for the Greater Cambridge Planning Service. A careers fair had been held the day before in the Great Barn in Bourn, where school children had been encouraged to consider a career in the planning service. The consultation on the Council's Statement of Community Involvement included engaging with young people.

It was noted that many of the recommendations had been taken up by Cabinet. A vote was taken and by affirmation

Council **agreed** to

- A)** Ask officers to share the general feedback received from young people during the Task & Finish Group's work with local authorities and educational providers so they can take this into account when providing their services.
- B)** Ask officers to write to Village Colleges and other secondary schools in South Cambridgeshire to offer the opportunity to present to them on the elections process and ask if we can further support their curriculum.
- C)** Note the successful youth engagement programme currently run by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service and supports the provision of appropriate coaching to enable officers in other priority areas such as

housing and local business to find ways of similarly involving young people.

- D)** Ask officers to investigate the feasibility of holding, within the next 12 months, a scheduled meeting of the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee at a local educational establishment, to which students and other young people should be invited.
- E)** Ask the Leader to write a letter to the Mayor of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority highlighting the feedback from young people on the limitations of public transport and urging him to take into account their views when developing proposals for bus franchising.
- F)** Invite young people, including from the groups approached as part of the Task & Finish exercise (**Appendix 1**), to contribute evidence to officers involved in developing a new Equality Policy embracing generational differences.
- G)** Encourage all Members of South Cambridgeshire District Council to commit to engaging with young people and representative organisations in their wards by establishing regular visits to local schools, colleges, youth clubs and other locations as appropriate.

9. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority

The Leader explained that whilst there had been a meeting of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board in late September, it had been too late to include the decision sheet in the Council agenda.

Councillor Heather Williams asked for clarification of the statement made by the Council's representative at the last meeting of the Board that the option of a road charge remained on the table. Councillor John Williams explained that in relation to the discussion on the Local Transport Connectivity Plan across all of Cambridgeshire, he had stated that the possibility of future charging in the area should not be ruled out.

Councillor Dr Richard Williams requested that any discussions on the bus services at the Combined Authority Transport Infrastructure Committee be reported. Councillor Peter McDonald explained that bus routes had not yet been discussed by the Committee, but he would update all councillors when this occurred.

10. Greater Cambridge Partnership

Councillor Brian Milnes explained that at the Greater Cambridge Partnership Executive Board meeting on 28 September there had been a lack of political consensus on whether to develop the Sustainable Travel Zone and so the decision had been made not to proceed. Councillor Heather Williams respected the honesty of Councillor Brian Milnes on this issue. She expressed her concern that the Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint Assembly had not been permitted to scrutinise the report before it went to the Board.

Councillor Dr Richard Williams asked who was responsible for taking decisions on the Board. Councillor Brian Milnes explained that the three Council members on the Board needed to agree for a decision to be taken and there had not been a political consensus across the three authorities.

11. **Update on the Oxford to Cambridge Regional Partnership**

The Leader presented this report on the work of the Oxford to Cambridge Pan Regional Partnership.

Councillor Heather Williams asked whether the Council's representatives on the Partnership was responsible for the authority's position with regards to the Partnership or whether the ruling Group's prospective candidate to be MP for South Cambridgeshire was in control. The Leader explained that parliamentary candidates had a free voice, as did the current MP, who was regularly critical of his own Government. The Leader was the Council's representative on the Partnership and she led on environmental issues, which she believed that the opposition group would also support. All the region's local authorities of all political parties were represented in the Partnership.

Councillor Daniel Lentell suggested that a full debate on the work of the Partnership should be held in the Chamber, along with discussions on the four day week and the county's transport policy.

Councillor Dr Richard Williams asked why £175,000 had been allocated, with £50,000 set up costs, for a data observatory. The Leader explained that the objective was to collate the information into one place and that any expenditure required approval from the civil servants. More information on the initiative was available on the Partnership's website.

Councillor Richard Stobart praised the Partnership for championing rural issues and the sustainable management of the countryside. The Leader stated that there was an important meeting on this matter on Friday 24 November at Milton Keynes.

Councillor Stephen Drew expressed his surprise that the Conservative group appeared to be opposed to an organisation set up by a Conservative Government. The Leader replied that the administration was keen to be a good Partner that worked well with others, regardless of their political party.

12. **Membership of Committees and Outside Bodies**

Council

Agreed to approve the appointment of Councillor Richard Stobart as representative on the Rural Services Network and the appointment of Councillor Anna Bradnam and Councillor Paul Bearpark as representatives on the A10 Ely to A14 Improvements Scheme Working Group.

Council

Noted that Councillor Lina Nieto was replacing Councillor Mark Howell on the Civic Affairs Committee. Councillor Mark Howell would now become a substitute on that Committee.

13. Questions From Councillors

13 (a) From Councillor Daniel Lentell

A year ago I asked if the leadership of this council shared my concern that the inclusion of the hospitals at Addenbrooke's in the GCP's proposed congestion charge scheme was likely to derail the wider proposals and sink any chance for better public transport in Cambridgeshire.

Will the Leader update her answer in light of recent events?

The Leader replied no to the above question. She explained that there was a lack of cross-party agreement on the vision that would have addressed congestion, air pollution and provided funding for public transport.

There was no supplementary question, but Councillor Daniel Lentell expressed his opposition to charging residents for travelling to Addenbrooke's Hospital and suggested that this matter had politically damaged those who had supported it.

13 (b) From Councillor Heather Williams

Can the Leader say how many hours a day on average are staff actually contracted for?

The Leader explained that most officers worked full time, which was 37 hours a week or 7.4 hours a day. Approximately a hundred staff worked part-time and their hours varied. Councillor Heather Williams asked if the Leader could give a total number of hours worked every day. The Leader reported that Councillor Heather Williams would receive a written response to this question.

13 (c) From Councillor Graham Cone

Can the Leader tell us what the average hourly wage is for all staff?

The Leader explained that the average pay for staff was £18.20 per hour based on contracted hours. As his supplementary question, Councillor Graham Cone asked if this meant that the average cost to the tax payer was £134.68 per member of staff. The Leader replied that she did not understand the question and asked Councillor Graham Cone to rephrase it, who declined to do so.

13 (d) From Councillor Mark Howell

Why does the Leader think it is acceptable for the 4-day working week trial to

have commenced and continued without a vote at Full Council?

Councillor Mark Howell had left the meeting and so it was agreed that he would be provided with a written response to his question.

13 (e) From Councillor Sue Ellington

The Leader must have the ability to change workers' working conditions to put them back to a 5-day working week. What is the Leader's plan B if the data proves unsupportive?

The Leader explained that recent data showed that staff were supportive of the change and there had been an improvement in performance. There had been no change in officers' contracts and the change was voluntary. If necessary, all staff could revert to their pre-trial working pattern.

Councillor Sue Ellington suggested that staff may have made childcare and travel arrangements based on the four-day week. She asked if new staff were aware of the fact that the Council could revert back to a five-day week. The Leader replied that new staff were informed that the four-day week was being trialled and that if the data did not support it, the Council would revert back to a five-day week.

13 (f) From Councillor Tom Bygott

How much has the Leader's administration spent on reports about the 4-day working week, mystery shopper exercises and staff health and wellbeing surveys in the last two years?

The Leader explained that the only cost was officer time and this was not specifically recorded. The mystery shopper exercise for the contact centre and the health and wellbeing survey was being carried out regardless of the four-day week.

As his supplementary question, Councillor Tom Bygott asked if the Leader could elaborate on the fact that officers did not record their time. The Leader explained that officers were not micro-managed and needed to get on and do their jobs without recording the time taken for all the work that they did.

13 (g) From Councillor Bunty Waters

Can the Leader confirm how much two new electric bin lorries will cost?

Councillor Henry Batchelor explained that the cost of each lorry was £452,700 and so the total cost for two lorries was double this.

As her supplementary question, Councillor Bunty Waters asked what the range was of the electric vehicles. Councillor Henry Batchelor replied that due to improvements in technology the range was improving and whilst the vehicles could originally only cover Waterbeach and the nearby area, they could now reach the south eastern edge of the District.

13 (h) From Councillor Dr Richard Williams

Can the Leader inform the Council of the total administrative costs to the Council of the administration's 4 Day Week experiment, including, but not limited to, the cost of publicising changes to bin collections and the cost of the time spent by officers defending the administrations' policy?

The Leader explained that the costs of altering the bin rounds were not due to the four-day week as they were due to be reviewed, to ensure that they remained efficient. Councillor Dr Richard Williams expressed his surprise at the Leader's answer as it was difficult to believe that the review, which involved writing to all households in the District, and the interruption of many residents' bin service, was unrelated to the four-day week. He suggested that it was costing an extra £100,000 to provide the same waste service under the four-day week arrangement and he urged the Leader to abandon the trial. The Leader explained that she had answered the question and expressed her disappointment that her word appeared to be doubted. She stated that due to population growth a review was necessary and suggested that it was no different to the review carried out by the last Conservative administration in 2017/18.

13 (i) From Councillor Peter Sandford

Could the Leader tell us how many South Cambridgeshire residents have applied for grants under the Action on Energy schemes? Of those applications, how many have been approved, how many were rejected, and how many were approved but are still waiting for work to be completed?

Councillor Brian Milnes explained that changes had been made to the energy partnership scheme and lessons had been learned as the service was being reappraised as it moved into its second phase.

As his supplementary question Councillor Peter Sandford related specific problems that a resident of his had had with the scheme and asked for assurance that such problems would not be repeated. Councillor Brian Milnes stated that he would discuss this matter with officers, who were keen to improve the service.

13 (j) From Councillor Dr Lisa Redrup

Can the Oxford Cambridge Partnership really develop environmental projects that help us address the climate emergency and support our doubling nature strategy?

The Leader explained that more details of the environment project was available on the website. The project was helping the Council to double nature and address the climate emergency. There was no supplementary question.

13 (k) From Councillor Richard Stobart

December's Christmas Market was well attended by traders and members of the

public. Is there a plan for a Christmas Market this year - and if so, how will it build on last year's experience?

Councillor Peter McDonald explained that a date had now been announced for the Christmas market. Research had shown that £25,000 had been spent at last year's event and so it had been agreed that it was worth repeating.

As his supplementary question, Councillor Richard Stobart asked how this and similar events informed the Council's policy on supporting businesses. Councillor Peter McDonald replied that the Council focussed on supporting small and medium sized businesses and for some organisations last year's Christmas market was the first event they had attended. The aim was to "pump prime" the local economy from a small base.

14. Notices of Motion

14 (a) Standing in the name of Councillor Heather Williams

Councillor Heather Williams introduced her motion. She proposed and Councillor Graham Cone seconded that Section 13, paragraph 6a of Standing Orders be suspended. The Deputy Head of Legal explained that if this was agreed, the motion could be voted on at the meeting. The Chair explained that usually a matter for the executive would be taken to Cabinet for a final decision. The proposal was that this be suspended. The Leader expressed her opposition to the proposal, as the motion referred to a matter that was the responsibility of Cabinet.

A vote was taken and were cast as follows:

In favour (8):

Councillors Tom Bygott, Graham Cone, Sue Ellington, Daniel Lentell, Lina Nieto, Bunty Waters, Dr Richard Williams and Heather Williams.

Against (20):

Councillors Michael Atkins, Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Peter Fane, Bill Handley, Sunita Hansraj, Sally Ann Hart, Geoff Harvey, Dr James Hobro, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Annika Osborne, Peter Sandford, Bridget Smith, Richard Stobart and John Williams.

Abstain (0):

The proposal was **defeated**.

Councillor Heather Williams asserted that the four-day week affected all residents and in 12 months £3.3m of salaried hours would not be worked. This was such an important matter all residents should have been consulted on and all councillors should be involved in its decision. She stated that the ruling political

group had changed its mind on many previous issues, including the introduction of blue bins, the provision of community facilities at Northstowe, a motion on youth engagement and the congestion charge. She suggested that the reputation of the Council was suffering and urged that the administration reverse its decision on the four-day week. She concluded that this was too important a matter to be determined by Cabinet.

Councillor Graham Cone urged members not to be afraid of the motion and agree that all councillors should be involved in this important matter.

The Leader announced that £760,000 had been saved as a result of the four-day week trial, as more permanent staff and fewer agency staff were being employed. Higher calibre staff were now applying for vacancies. The trial also meant that the waste service was not being disrupted by bank holidays and the contact centre was increasing its hours of service. The Leader assured Council that if the administration decided that it wanted to make the four-day week permanent, residents would be consulted and Council would vote on the proposed change.

Councillor James Hobro stated that it was important that the Council remained flexible in a highly competitive jobs market. The four-day week trial was proposed a year ago when the authority was having serious problems with recruitment and was spending £2m a year on agency staff for work that should have been carried out by permanent staff. The four-day week had been tried and tested in the private sector and the results of the trial had been promising, with half the vacant positions filled and services improved. He concluded that he was opposing the motion as the trial should be allowed to continue and the Council should objectively consider all the evidence at the end of this trial.

Councillor Sally Ann Hart explained that another report on the four-day week would be considered at the next meeting of the Employment and Staffing Committee on 9 November 2023. She asserted that it would be wrong to reverse the decision to trial the four-day week for a year, especially as the data reported to the Employment and Staffing Committee indicated that the four-day week was having a positive effect on recruitment. She expressed her pride in being a member of a forward-thinking authority that had decided to trial such an innovative practice.

Councillor Tom Bygott asserted that democratic governance meant taking decisions to the benefit of the people and as the trialling of a four-day week was a major decision affecting our residents it should be taken at Council. To defer the matter to Cabinet was simply undemocratic.

Councillor Brian Milnes lamented the disinformation being perpetrated by external right-wing organisations regarding the four-day week. He explained that the Council was part way through a trial and if the current trends continued it would be shown to be a success. The current Government had invited local authorities to be innovative and that was what this Council was doing.

The Leader proposed that in line with paragraph 14d in the Standing Orders Council should refer this matter to Cabinet. Councillor Brian Milnes seconded this

proposal.

Councillor Dr Richard Williams disputed the quoted savings of £700,000, which he asserted included savings that had been realised before the four-day week had been implemented. He suggested that there was more information to be discussed and that it was wrong to curtail the debate.

Councillor Daniel Lentell explained that whilst he supported the trial of the four-day week he opposed the proposal to end the debate as it was undemocratic.

Councillor Heather Williams lamented that not all councillors had been able to contribute to the debate. The Chair explained that there had been only two further speakers and Council had heard from both of them. A vote was taken and were cast as follows:

In favour (19):

Councillors Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Peter Fane, Bill Handley, Sunita Hansraj, Sally Ann Hart, Geoff Harvey, Dr Tumi Hawkins, Dr James Hobro, Brian Milnes, Annika Osborne, Peter Sandford, Bridget Smith, Richard Stobart and John Williams.

Against (8):

Councillors Tom Bygott, Graham Cone, Sue Ellington, Daniel Lentell, Lina Nieto, Bunt Waters, Dr Richard Williams and Heather Williams.

Abstain (0):

Council **agreed** to refer the following motion to Cabinet:

This Council will receive a report on the 4-day working week trial at the November 2023 meeting and will debate and vote as to whether or not the trial should continue. This report will include the potential consequences of ignoring the national government's directive to stop the trial, with particular reference to any financial consequences that may occur from ignoring the national government for a second time.

15. Chair's Engagements

Council **noted** the Chair's engagements since the last Council meeting.

The Meeting ended at 4.23 p.m.
