

## **South Cambridgeshire District Council**

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held on  
Thursday, 30 November 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, Dr. Shrobona Bhattacharya, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr. Martin Cahn, Graham Cone, Stephen Drew, Libby Earle, Sue Ellington, Corinne Garvie, Bill Handley, Geoff Harvey, Carla Hofman, Mark Howell, Helene Leeming, Daniel Lentell, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Lina Nieto, Dr Lisa Redrup, Bridget Smith, Richard Stobart, Bunty Waters, Heather Williams, John Williams and Dr. Richard Williams

Councillor Cllr Dr Tumi Hawkins was in attendance remotely.

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

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Tom Bygott, Jose Hales, Sunita Hansraj, Sally Ann Hart, Dr Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, Dr James Hobro, William Jackson-Wood, Annika Osbourne, Judith Rippeth, Dr Aidan Van de Weyer, Dr Susan van de Ven, Natalie Warren-Green and Eileen Wilson.

Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins attended the meeting online.

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Apologies were received from Councillors Tom Bygott, Jose Hales, Sunita Hansraj, Sally Ann Hart, Dr Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, Dr James Hobro, William Jackson-Wood, Annika Osbourne, Judith Rippeth, Dr Aidan Van de Weyer, Dr Susan van de Ven, Natalie Warren-Green and Eileen Wilson.

Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins attended the meeting online.

### **2. Declaration of Interest**

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

Councillor Richard Stobart declared an Other Registerable Interest as a Director of South Cambs Investment Partnerships and South Cambs Projects.

### **3. Register of Interests**

The Chair reminded Members to inform Democratic Services of any changes to their Register of Members' Financial and Other Interests form.

### **4. Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 October were agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

- In Apologies, the title "Dr" should be added to Councillor Dr Shrobona Bhattacharya's name.
- In agenda item 8a, Councillor Sue Ellington's vote against be recorded.
- In the first paragraph on page 15, the words Village College be changed to education institution.

### **5 (a) Announcements from the Chair**

The Chair announced that a working group would meet on 7 December to discuss the proposed celebration of the Council's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year. They would then report to the Civic Affairs Committee on 14 December.

### **6. Announcements from the Leader and Cabinet**

The Leader announced that

- Civil Parking Enforcement had been agreed within the District, following work with the Greater Cambridge Partnership.
- A climate action conference had been held in Cottenham in memory of former Councillor John Loveluck.
- The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board has passed the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.

### **7. Announcements from the Head of Paid Service**

There were no announcements from the Chief Executive.

### **8. Questions From the Public**

Elizabeth McWilliams explained that White Ribbon day was held on 25 November, to raise awareness and take action to end men's violence against women and girls. She welcomed the fact that the Chair and others were wearing White Ribbons. She asked if the Council was going to follow other local authorities, including the Cambridge City Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council and obtain White Ribbon accreditation and if not, why not?

Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, reported that the Council was committed to tackling domestic violence against women and girls and had gained Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation in December 2022. This had resulted in the development of a domestic abuse policy, training for staff and support for both victims and perpetrators. The

Council was the second local authority to gain DAHA accreditation and had worked with other Councils who wanted to follow this authority's example, which included the sharing of policies and training programmes. The Council did not have any plans to seek White Ribbon accreditation, as its commitment to this issue was clear from its DAHA accreditation. The Council was pleased to promote White Ribbon day, which had included the displaying of posters in the Council's offices in Cambourne.

Elizabeth McWilliams explained that the White Ribbon campaign covered all violence against women, whilst the DAHA accreditation only covered domestic abuse. She said she was aware that some councillors supported White Ribbon accreditation and asked if the Council was going to debate this matter. Councillor John Batchelor explained that the Council considered DAHA accreditation to be wide ranging and covering the same issues as the White Ribbon campaign. The Council was a relatively small authority and to achieve White Ribbon accreditation would result in a significant use of time and resources. The Council remained fully supportive of the White Ribbon campaign but would not be pursuing accreditation at this time.

The Chair thanked Elizabeth McWilliams for her question.

## 9. **Petitions**

No petitions had been received.

## 10. **To Consider the Following Recommendation:**

### 10 (a) **Licensing Act 2003 - Review of Statement of Licensing Policy (Licensing Committee, 19 October 2023)**

Councillor Henry Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Licensing, introduced this report, which invited Council to agree the adoption of the revised Statement of Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2023. Councillor Anna Bradnam, Chair of the Licensing Committee, thanked officers for their work in drafting this policy, which included the requirement that an Environmental Health Officer was involved in large events.

Councillor Henry Batchelor proposed and Councillor Anna Bradnam seconded the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and Council unanimously

**Agreed** to adopt the revised Statement of Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2005 for a period of up to five years from 31 January 2024.

### 10 (b) **2022/23 Provisional General Fund Revenue and Capital Outturn (Cabinet, 7 November)**

Councillor John Williams presented this report, which reviewed the General Fund Revenue and Capital outturn position for the financial year 2022/23 with Reserve

balances as at 31 March 2023, and to agree proposed changes to the Capital Programme. He explained that the report showed that the Council was in a good financial position. He reported that the footway lighting and parish renewal programme had been completed.

Councillor Heather Williams expressed concern over the fact that net operational costs were in excess of what had been expected. Councillor John Williams explained that this was because the Council had paid its contributions to the A14 improvements earlier than expected, which had resulted in a savings of £2.3 million.

Councillor Heather Williams queried why £316,000 of unspent revenue budgets had been rolled over to 2023/24. Councillor John Williams explained that most of this was due to the renovation of the offices in Cambourne to improve its energy efficiency and install electric vehicle charging points. He added that if the renovations had been delayed it would have cost the Council more in the longer run.

Councillor Brian Milnes congratulated the finance team for ensuring that the Council was in a secure financial position, which was in contrast to many other local authorities.

Councillor John Williams proposed and Councillor Bridget Smith seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and were cast as follows:

**In favour (21):**

Councillors Michael Atkins, Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Stephen Drew, Libby Earle, Bill Handley, Geoff Harvey, Carla Hofman, Helene Leeming, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Dr Lisa Redrup, Peter Sandford, Bridget Smith, Richard Stobart, Dr Aidan Van de Weyer and John Williams.

**Against (8):**

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

**Abstain (1):**

Councillor Daniel Lentell.

Council

**Agreed** to

- A)** Acknowledge the 2022/23 general fund revenue outturn position and the net underspend (after income from Taxation and Government Grants) in the year of £1.099 million as summarised in Appendix A, and the explanations provided for the variances compared to the revised 2022/23 revenue budget;
- B)** Acknowledge the consequent increase in the General Fund as at 31 March

2023 of £3.258m to around £18.4m;

- C)** Approve the carry forwards of £0.316 million in relation to General Fund revenue projects which were not undertaken during the year as planned.
- D)** In relation to the Capital Programme:
  - (i) Note the 2022/23 capital outturn of £15.520 million.
  - (ii) Acknowledge the performance achieved in relation to the Capital Programme schemes substantially completed in 2022/2023, summarised in Appendix B.
  - (iii) Approve the carry forwards of £3.720 million in relation to General Fund capital projects due mainly to slippage.
  - (iv) To note that a full review of the Capital Programme will be submitted to Cabinet at its December 2023 meeting to include re-phasing of the existing programme and new Capital bids for the next budget cycle.

**10 (c) 2022/23 Provisional Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn (Cabinet, 7 November)**

Councillor Heather Williams announced that the opposition group would support the recommendations in the report, as there was cross-party support for the building of council housing.

In response to questioning, Councillor John Williams stated that the Council had built 143 dwellings last year and of these 97 were social rented. The Council would continue to develop its housing stock and he thanked officers for identifying opportunities to build more housing, which was particularly challenging for the authority as it did not own much land.

Councillor Brian Milnes expressed his appreciation for the 132 affordable homes built in Babraham.

By affirmation

Council

**Agreed** to

- A)** Acknowledge the 2022/23 revenue outturn position and the net underspend in the year of £0.473 million, and the explanations provided for the variances compared to the revised 2022/23 revenue budget;
- B)** Acknowledge the overall decrease in the Housing Revenue Account balance as at 31 March 2023 to £3.878 million;
- C)** In relation to the Capital Programme:
  - (i) Note the 2022/23 capital outturn of £21.405 million;
  - (ii) Acknowledge the performance achieved in relation to the Capital

Programme schemes substantially completed in 2022/2023, summarised in Appendix A.

- (iii) Approve the carry forward amounts of £3.034 million to 2023/24 in relation to HRA housebuilding during 2022/23, due to slippage.

**10 (d) Medium Term Financial Strategy (Cabinet, 7 November)**

Councillor John Williams presented this report on the review of the Council's five-year Medium Term Financial Strategy. The future decisions of the Government were uncertain, but it appeared likely that it would retain a greater percentage of business rates and that rural areas of high growth would receive less funding. This meant that after five years the Council was looking at a deficit of £5m, which had been reduced from an expected deficit of £6m. The Council had met its target of receiving 25% income from commercial investments. A further £2 million of savings were expected from the Transformation Programme.

Councillor Heather Williams expressed concern regarding the size of the deficit and expressed doubt that sufficient savings would be found.

In response to questioning, Councillor John Williams explained that the administration had decided in 2018 to increase the Council's commercial investments, which had included investing in the Science Park, which was in the District. The administration had succeeded in increasing the income from commercial investments from £1m to £7m. This success had been recognised by the external auditors and the peer review.

Councillor John Williams explained that currently the Government retained 50% of business rates, this authority received 40%, the County Council received 9% and the Fire Authority received 1%.

Councillor John Williams agreed that Councillor Lina Nieto should receive a written response to her question on whether the income received from business rates was ring-fenced to support housing development and economic development.

Councillor John Williams proposed and the Leader seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and were cast as follows:

**In favour (23):**

Councillors Michael Atkins, Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Stephen Drew, Libby Earle, Peter Fane, Corrine Garvie, Bill Handley, Geoff Harvey, Carla Homan, Helene Leeming, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Dr Lisa Redrup, Peter Sandford, Bridget Smith, Richard Stobart, Dr Aidan Van de Weyer and John Williams.

**Against (6):**

Councillors Dr Shrobona Bhattacharya, Graham Cone, Sue Ellington, Lina Nieto, Dr Richard Williams and Heather Williams.

**Abstain (1):**

Councillor Daniel Lentell.

Council

**Agreed** to

- A) Acknowledge the projected changes in service spending and the overall resources available to the Council over the medium term to 2028/2029.
- B) Adopt the refreshed Medium Term Financial Strategy at Appendix A and updated financial forecast at Appendix B.

**11. Appointment of Independent Remuneration Panel Member**

Councillor John Williams presented this report, which recommended that the Council appoint Nicky Blanning to the Independent Remuneration Panel to ensure that the authority complies with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) Regulations 2003.

Councillor John Williams proposed and Councillor Brian Milnes seconded the recommendation in the report and by affirmation

Council

**Agreed** to appoint Nicky Blanning to the South Cambridgeshire District Council Independent Remuneration Panel for a three-year term of office, expiring on 30 November 2026.

**12. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority**

Council considered the report from the recent Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority meetings.

The Leader reported that a cross party Committee had reached a unanimous decision regarding the imposition of sanctions on the Mayor, due to a lack of leadership regarding his response to a matter that had taken place two years ago. The Combined Authority's Monitoring Officer had advised that it was not in the public interest to publish the full investigator's report. The Leader expressed the hope that the Combined Authority could now focus on working hard for the residents it represented.

Councillor Daniel Lentell expressed concern that the safety of Combined Authority staff was being seen as a minor issue. The Leader assured Councillor Lentell that the matter had been taken very seriously and the Sub Committee had discussed the code of conduct complaint for two hours. The Committee had found that there had been no physical or sexual impropriety, only a failure of leadership. In response to Councillor Heather Williams, the Leader agreed that if any employee felt unsafe at work they should report their concerns. She agreed

to find out the costs of the hearing.

The Leader welcomed the Board's decision to agree the Transport Plan, which would reverse the decline in local bus services.

**13. Greater Cambridge Partnership**

Council considered the minutes of the Greater Cambridge Partnership Executive Board on 28 September 2023. In response to Councillor Dr Richard Williams, the Leader stated that a future congestion charge in the area remained an option. This was in accordance with Government guidance.

Councillor Brian Milnes explained that the Cambridge South-East Transport Scheme was being reviewed in light of the Government's Cambridge 2040 plans.

**14. Update on the Oxford to Cambridge Regional Partnership - Oral Update from the Leader**

The Leader reported that the Oxford Cambridge Partnership had held a conference at Milton Keynes last Friday, which had been attended by over 200 delegates. More details were available on their website and more councils were now getting involved.

It was noted that details of any Board meetings would be reported to the next Council meeting.

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

No amendments to Committee membership were reported.

**16. Questions From Councillors**

**16 (a) From Councillor Daniel Lentell**

At the previous meeting of the Council the Leader referenced Cambridgeshire's relative lack of mature trees. How will the unnecessary cutting down of Coton Orchard make that situation better and is the cutting down of mature woodland a price worth paying in order to shave just 2 minutes from the journey time compared to the on-road options?

The Leader recognised the balance between improving infrastructure and the impact on habitat. The proposed road development affecting Coton Orchard would result in the planting of 1,500 new trees, the maintaining of hedgerows and 80% of the existing trees. The ambition was to achieve a biodiversity net gain of 20%.

Councillor Daniel Lentell stated that in the past, trees planted by developers had died and so he expressed concern that the biodiversity net gain target would not be achieved.



**16 (b) From Councillor Heather Williams**

Does the Leader appreciate that when changes are made to independent reports at the request of this Council, residents and councillors lose faith in the independence of all information being put in front of us?

The Leader replied that it was always necessary to check reports to ensure that they were factually accurate. Failure to do this could lead to a lack credibility in the report.

Councillor Heather Williams asked if the Leader was happy with the process in which a report was amended. The Leader replied that that she was satisfied that ensuring that a report was accurate was an acceptable reason for amending it.

**16 (c) From Councillor Graham Cone**

Does the Leader understand why so many people are disheartened by Cabinet's response to the relocation of the Wastewater Treatment Plant to Honey Hill?

Councillor Peter McDonald explained that ultimately the Secretary of State would have to make a decision regarding any relocation of the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The Council had provided technical information on this issue.

Councillor Graham Cone asked if Councillor Peter McDonald believed that the views of the residents of Fulbourn ward had been taken into consideration. Councillor McDonald replied that there were a number of comments and considerations that needed to be taken into account by the decision maker.

**16 (d) From Councillor Dr Richard Williams**

Previously, the Leader has written a letter of support for East West Rail. Does the Leader believe that the current proposed route is acceptable for the residents of South Cambridgeshire?

Councillor Peter McDonald explained that the administration remained in support of the East West Rail project and had been seeking further information on the proposed route from the Government but had not yet received a response.

Councillor Dr Richard Williams expressed concern that the current proposals put a junction between Newton and Harston, which would cause disruption to the local road network. He asked if the administration would support residents in their demand to have this substantially changed. Councillor Brian Milnes stated that connectivity loss was a key issue for the administration, which would continue to contact both East West Rail and the Government on this issue.

**16 (e) From Councillor Lina Nieto**

Can the Leader assure us this Council will take appropriate action to address South Cambridgeshire residents' concerns about noise pollution in the district

given the expansion of Luton Airport?

In the absence of Councillor Lina Nieto, it was agreed to provide a written answer to the above question.

**16 (f) From Councillor Mark Howell**

Does the Leader and the administration still believe that the C2C busway plans should proceed?

In the absence of Councillor Mark Howell, it was agreed to provide a written answer to the above question.

**16 (g) From Councillor Tom Bygott**

Is the Leader confident that the budget gap for CSET will be found – or does the Leader believe it is time to think about alternative proposals?

In the absence of Councillor Tom Bygott, it was agreed to provide a written answer to the above question.

**17. Notices of Motion**

**17 (a) Standing in the name of Councillor Heather Williams**

Councillor Heather Williams proposed and Councillor Daniel Lentell seconded the following motion:

This Council is opposed to any form of road charging in Cambridgeshire.

Councillor Heather Williams explained that the main purpose of this motion was to reflect the views of residents who did not want road charging in the county. She hoped that those who had expressed support for road charges in the past would change their minds.

Councillor Brian Milnes stated the Council had no remit over highway matters such as road charging. The current Government had made it clear that they believed road charging to be inevitable and this view had been reflected by Conservatives on the County Council.

Councillor Stephen Drew suggested that the Conservative opposition to road charges was a superficial populist strategy and he would be opposing the motion.

Councillor Peter Sanford stated that a cross party Transport Select Committee had indicated support for road charges and in the absence of any alternative way of funding transport infrastructure he would be opposing the motion.

Councillor Graham Cone expressed his support for the motion. He stated that the Council had representation on the Greater Cambridge Partnership and passing

this motion would make it less likely that the congestion charge idea would be resurrected.

Councillor Dr Martin Cahn explained that the motion referred to the whole county and so was a different issue from the congestion charge. He stated that the Government's plans for Cambridge 2040 included a local transport system and he invited the opposition group to suggest an alternative way of funding this.

Councillor Dr Richard Williams expressed his support for the motion, which would provide clarity on the Council's position on this issue. He stated that voters wanted to know politicians' views on important matters like road charging.

Councillor Anna Bradman stated that she would oppose the motion as it would restrain future decision makers.

Councillor Daniel Lentell stated that road charging was unfair because it would cost all road users the same amount, regardless of their income. He added that buses were unreliable and so residents had to rely on private transport for their needs, including the attending of health care appointments.

Councillor Heather Williams expressed her disappointment in the debate and in those who had made party political points. She concluded that she would have supported this motion regardless of who was in power locally or nationally.

A vote was taken and were cast as follows:

**In favour (6):**

Councillors Dr Shrobona Bhattacharya, Graham Cone, Sue Ellington, Daniel Lentell, Dr Richard Williams and Heather Williams.

**Against (20):**

Councillors Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Stephen Drew, Libby Earle, Peter Fane, Corrine Garvie, Bill Handley, Geoff Harvey, Helene Leeming, Brian Milnes, Dr Lisa Redrup, Peter Sandford, Bridget Smith, Richard Stobart, Dr Aidan Van de Weyer and John Williams.

**Abstain (0):**

Council **Rejected** this motion.

**18. Chair's Engagements**

Council noted the Chair's recent engagements.

The Chair explained that he would be attending the Council's Christmas market on 10 December and would be presenting gifts to Fulbourn hospital. He invited councillors to contact the Communications team about providing presents for children of asylum seekers who were currently staying at the hotel in Bar Hill.

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**The Meeting ended at 4.45 p.m.**

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