

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held on
Thursday, 22 September 2022 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Anna Bradnam – Chair
Councillor Peter Fane – Vice-Chair

Councillors: John Batchelor, Dr. Shrobona Bhattacharya, Ariel Cahn,
Dr. Martin Cahn, Graham Cone, Stephen Drew, Sue Ellington,
Corinne Garvie, Jose Hales, Sunita Hansraj, Sally Ann Hart,
Geoff Harvey, Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, James Hobro,
Carla Hofman, Helene Leeming, Daniel Lentell, Dr John Loveluck,
Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Lina Nieto, Dr Lisa Redrup,
Judith Rippeth, Peter Sandford, Richard Stobart, Dr Susan van de Ven,
Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer, Bunty Waters, Heather Williams, John Williams
and Dr. Richard Williams

Councillor Cllr Bill Handley was in attendance remotely.

Officers:	Rebecca Dobson	Democratic Services Manager
	Rory McKenna	Monitoring Officer
	Liz Watts	Chief Executive

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Michael Atkins, Henry Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Sarah Cheung Johnson, Libby Earle, Bill Handley, Mark Howell, William Jackson-Wood, Alex Malyon, Annika Osborne and Bridget Smith. Councillor Bill Handley attended the meeting remotely.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Michael Atkins, Henry Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Sarah Cheung Johnson, Libby Earle, Bill Handley, Mark Howell, William Jackson-Wood, Alex Malyon, Annika Osborne and Bridget Smith. Councillor Bill Handley attended the meeting remotely.

2. Declaration of Interest

Councillor Heather Williams declared an interest in agenda item 13 as a member of the Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint Assembly Partnership.

3. Register of Interests

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

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2022 were agreed as a correct

record.

5. Announcements

The Chair announced that her charity for this municipal year would be the Trussell Trust, a charity that supports a network of over 1,200 food bank centres in the UK.

The Deputy Leader, Councillor Judith Rippeth, congratulated Councillor Michael Atkins and his wife Becky on the birth of their daughter Lucy Elizabeth.

6. Questions From the Public

It was noted that David Sargeant, member of the West Wickham Neighbourhood Plan team, wished to speak on agenda item 9 the West Wickham Neighbourhood Plan. The Chair proposed and Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins seconded that this agenda item be discussed after agenda item 6. This was agreed by affirmation.

Member of the public, Daniel Clark, expressed concern regarding the Council's recent decision to trial a four day working week for staff. He asked whether the proposed four day working week would apply to all internal desk-based admin staff.

The Deputy Leader explained that a four day working week would be trialled for all office based staff for three months from January to March next year.

As his supplementary question Daniel Clark asked for assurance that there would be no drop in service outcomes for residents as a result of this initiative. The Deputy Leader explained that the purpose of the trial was to analyse the work of the Council through Key Performance Indicators and if there was a decline in service the initiative would not be made permanent.

7. Petitions

There were no petitions.

8. To Consider the Following Recommendation:

8 (a) 2021/22 Provisional Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn (Cabinet 12 September 2022)

Councillor John Williams presented this report on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital outturn position for the financial year 2021/22 with Reserve balances as at 31 March 2022 and which sought agreement to the proposed changes to the Capital Programme. He explained that there had been £2.7m slippage in the capital outturn with projects that would now be paid for in the current financial year.

Councillor John Batchelor welcomed the budget surplus achieved despite the

challenges caused by Covid-19. He noted that the HRA costs had to be met by rent. He praised staff for achieving 89 property completions in challenging circumstances.

Minor amendment

It was noted that Musgrove Way was in Fen Ditton and not Teversham as stated in paragraph 14 of the report.

Councillor John Williams proposed and Councillor John Batchelor seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and by affirmation

Council

Agreed to

- A)** Note the 2021/22 revenue outturn position and the net overspend in the year of £0.029 million, and the explanations provided for the variances compared to the revised 2021/22 revenue budget;
- B)** Note the overall increase in the Housing Revenue Account balance as at 31 March 2021 to £5.681 million;
- C)** In relation to the Capital Programme:
 - (i)** Note the 2021/22 capital outturn of £17.485 million;
 - (ii)** Acknowledge the performance achieved in relation to the Capital Programme schemes substantially completed in 2021/2022, summarised in Appendix A.
 - (iii)** Approve the carry forwards to 2022/23 of £0.836 million in relation to HRA Housing improvements due mainly to slippage.
 - (iv)** Approve the carry forward amounts of £1.896 million to 2022/23 in relation to HRA housebuilding during 2021/22, due to slippage.
 - (v)** Note that a full review of the Capital Programme will be submitted to Cabinet at its December 2022 meeting to include re-phasing of the existing programme and new Capital bids for the next budget cycle.

9. West Wickham Neighbourhood Plan

This item was discussed after agenda item 6.

Parish Councillor David Sargeant welcomed the adoption of the West Wickham Neighbourhood Plan on behalf of West Wickham Parish Council and he thanked the officers and volunteers who had supported its development.

Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins stated that this would be the sixth Neighbourhood Plan to be agreed by the administration. She praised the hard work of those on

the working group and the supporting officers, particularly Alison Talkington who had retired last month. There had been a turnout of 30% in the recent referendum and 91.9% of residents had voted in favour of the Plan's adoption. She asked Council to also vote in favour of adopting the plan, which would then become part of the Council's Local Plan which would influence decisions on future planning applications.

Councillor Geoff Harvey praised the work of officers and volunteers in the production of the Plan which was over 90 pages long and would complement the Local Plan. He praised parish councillor David Sargeant for his monthly updates.

Councillor Heather Williams thanked those involved in the Plan, which would make it easier for the Planning Committee to make its decisions by ensuring that there would be a steer from the local community.

Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins proposed and Councillor Geoff Harvey seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and by affirmation

Council

- A)** Notes that the referendum for the West Wickham Neighbourhood Plan took place on 11 August 2022,
- B)** As it was a successful referendum 'makes' (adopts) the West Wickham Neighbourhood Plan (The made version of the plan is Appendix 1 of this report).

10. Appointment of IRP Member

The Head of Finance presented this report, which asked Council to approve the appointment of two members of the Independent Remuneration Panel. He explained that that current Chair, Graham Jagger, was standing down and the resulting vacancy needed to be filled to allow this year's review of the allowances scheme to be completed. Two outstanding candidates had applied for the vacancy and it was recommended that both candidates be appointed to make the Panel more resilient.

Councillor John Williams thanked Graham Jagger for his service to the Council. He had been appointed to the Panel in 2008 and had become its Chair in 2011. Councillor Heather Williams suggested that the Chair write to Mr Jagger to formally thank him on behalf of the Council.

Councillor John Williams proposed and the Chair seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and by affirmation.

Council

Agreed to approve the appointment for a three year term of office, expiring on 30 September 2025, of Ged Dempsey and Amanda Orchard.

11. Review of Political Proportionality

The Democratic Services Manager presented this report which sought Council's approval of a reallocation of seats on committees following a change of political group membership due to the resignation as a member of the Liberal Democrat Group by Councillor Daniel Lentell. It was noted that this resulted in a single seat being transferred from the Liberal Democrat group to the Conservative group on either the Licensing Committee or the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.

The Chair proposed and the Vice Chair seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and by affirmation

Council

Agreed

- A)** The allocation of seats on committees as set out at Table 2 in Appendix A;
- B)** The nominations of the Political Group leaders to seats on the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and Licensing Committee as set out in Appendix B.

12. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority

The Deputy Leader explained that despite the best efforts of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, Stagecoach were planning to make cuts to several bus services.

Councillor Dr James Hobro expressed concern about the decision taken by Stagecoach to cut the 18 and 915 bus services which many of the District's residents relied on. The Deputy Leader assured Council that the Leader and Councillor John Williams had been working with the Mayor of the Combined Authority and others to try and replace the cut services.

Councillor Dr Shrobona Bhattacharya explained that many Cambourne residents relied on the 18 service, in particular students of Comberton Village College. She asked what alternative services could be provided. The Deputy Leader explained that Stagecoach was a private company and local authorities could not force them to maintain their service. The Council was working with the Combined Authority to replace the service.

Councillor Lina Nieto expressed her disappointment at the short notice provided to the public on the cuts to the Stagecoach bus service. She hoped that the Combined Authority would take action to ensure that sufficient bus services were provided for rural communities. Councillor John Williams explained that Stagecoach had provided 56 days notice of the change, as they were required to do. Prior to this the proposed changes were not known. The Combined Authority was using its emergency powers to tender for services that were being withdrawn. He added that the only way to prevent this reoccurring was for bus services to be delivered by the public sector.

Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins declared a non-registerable interest as her son attended Long Road Sixth Form college and was directly affected by the removal of the Citi 4 service. She expressed the hope that the Combined Authority would address the loss of this services as it affected the residents of Cambourne, Bourn, Caldecote and Hardwick. Councillor John Williams stated that the Combined Authority Board would meet in October and Councillor Dr Hawkins would be provided with a written response to her concerns regarding the Citi 4 service.

The Chair requested that a list be provided of all the routes that were being affected.

Councillor Sue Ellington suggested that all councillors in the affected villages identify how these changes were impacted on their residents. It was noted that there were many villages in the District that did not have a bus service.

Councillor Heather Williams suggested that the decision taken by Stagecoach to reduce buses on its routes indicated that buses could not provide an alternative to those not wanting to pay a future congestion charge. Councillor Dr Shrobona Bhattacharya also asked how a congestion charge could be justified if bus services were being reduced. The Chair explained that the congestion charge would be discussed under the Questions from Councillors section.

Councillor John Williams explained that taking a bus service's franchise back under local council control was a lengthy process. He reported that the counties of Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire were experiencing similar cuts to their rural bus services.

Councillor Daniel Lentell suggested that the Councillor who had stood for Mayor of the Combined Authority should be representing the Council on the Board.

Councillor Brian Milnes stated that the Combined Authority had limited influence over a private bus company. The solution was to restore the bus franchise to local authority control.

Council **noted** the report.

13. Greater Cambridge Partnership

The Chair explained that there was no report as the next Greater Cambridge Partnership Executive Board would be held on 28 September.

Councillor Graham Cone asked for an update on the Fulbourn to Cambridge Cycle Greenway. The report alluded to a completion date of 2025 but no start date had been provided and no indication of how the necessary resources would be allocated. Councillor Judith Rippeth expressed similar concerns about Waterbeach cycle greenway. Councillor Brian Milnes agreed to provide a written response regarding these issues.

Councillor Heather Williams requested that reports from the Greater Cambridge

Partnership Joint Assembly be included in the agenda. The Chair agreed to consider this.

14. Update on the OxCam Arc

The Deputy Leader explained that the Council were waiting for strategic plans for the OxCam Arc. Councillor Heather Williams asked what the administration wanted the project to achieve and how the Leader was representing the District at the meetings. The Deputy Leader explained that the country had a new Prime Minister and a new Minister for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Council was awaiting developments.

Council **noted** the report.

15. Members of Committees and Outside Bodies

Council **noted**

- A)** The appointment of Councillor Sunita Hansraj in place of Councillor Dan Lentell as a member of the Grants Advisory Committee and of Councillor Peter Sandford as a substitute Member on that Committee (as first substitute);
- B)** The appointment of Councillor Peter Fane as a substitute Member on Civic Affairs Committee and on Climate and Environment Advisory Committee;
- C)** The appointment of the following substitute Members to the Joint Local Planning Advisory Group are Councillors Heather Williams and Graham Cone (Conservative Group nominations) and Councillor Dr John Loveluck and Peter Sandford (Liberal Democrat Group nominations).

Council

Agreed to endorse the appointment of Councillors Sue Ellington as Vice Chair of the Grants Advisory Committee.

16. Questions From Councillors

16 (a) From Cllr Dan Lentell

Does the leadership of this council share my concern that the inclusion of the hospitals at Addenbrooke's in the GCP's proposed congestion charge scheme is likely to derail the wider proposals and sink any chance for better public transport in Cambridgeshire?

The Deputy Leader replied that no decision had been taken and the proposal would be going out to consultation. The provision of health care was one issue in a complex matter with many competing factors.

As his supplementary question, Councillor Daniel Lentell asked why an essential service like Addenbrookes Hospital was in the proposed congestion zone. The Deputy Leader replied that where to put the boundary was a contentious issue, which would be informed by the consultation process. She urged all residents to participate in the consultation when its launched later this year.

16 (b) From Cllr Graham Cone

What does the leader think the fairest way is to stop those that can least afford it paying a congestion charge, given the proposals indicated exemptions for those with lower incomes?

Councillor Brian Milnes replied that those on the lowest incomes could not afford a car and would benefit from a more reliable bus service. The recent announcement from Stagecoach showed how important it was to provide a reliable and affordable bus service, with a discount for those on the lowest income.

As his supplementary question, Councillor Cone asked how the congestion charge would be administered given that many of the district's residents on low incomes had cars. Councillor Milnes replied that the details of how the congestion charge would work had not been determined and that the consultation process would ensure that these matters were considered.

16 (c) From Cllr Dr Richard Williams

It was noted that Councillor Dr Richard Williams had withdrawn his question.

16 (d) From Cllr Carla Hofman

Can the leader explain to residents how they can ensure that they have their legitimate concerns about the City Access Proposal which was recently launched by the GCP heard and responded to?

Councillor Brian Milnes replied that several consultation exercises had taken place over the last five to six years including a citizens' assembly and a public event at the Corn Exchange. The proposed consultation would ensure that the views of cyclists, bus passengers and other stakeholders would be listened to. Councillor Carla Hoffman stated that her supplementary question had been answered.

16 (e) From Cllr Sally Ann Hart

Can the leader explain the democratic processes that exist in the running of the GCP which ensure residents of South Cambridgeshire have appropriate influence over the decisions that are made by this body?

The Deputy Leader explained that the Government had set up the Greater Cambridge Partnership to improve economic growth and its membership consisted of the District Council, City Council and the County Council. A business

representative and Cambridge University representative also sat on the Board as non-voting members. The governance arrangements were open and transparent with meetings held in public. In response to Councillor Hart's supplementary question the Deputy Leader stated that the Board agreed its governance rules in June 2016.

16 (f) From Cllr Dr John Loveluck

Can the Leader please explain to the Council how residents of South Cambridgeshire will benefit from the City Access proposals recently announced by the Greater Cambridge Partnership?

Councillor Brian Milnes explained that the purpose of the City Access proposal was to provide transport to the city that reduced people's reliance on cars. This would also reduce air pollution that was killing approximately 100 residents a year.

Councillor Dr John Loveluck asked whether "circumference" routes between villages could be improved. Councillor Brian Milnes explained that the demand would have to be sufficient to justify additional bus routes.

16 (g) From Cllr Heather Williams

Does the Leader believe that the threat of redundancies hanging over current and future employees helps with recruitment?

The Deputy Leader explained that if the Government could provide certainty on its fair funding review and allocation of business rates it would be easier for the Council to plan its future. The Authority was working with its officers and the unions on this issue but no guarantee could be given that there would be no redundancies in the future. Any proposed redundancies would be fully consulted on.

Councillor Heather Williams asked if the administration was satisfied with a letter that had been sent to all staff which implied that any improvement on a pay offer could result in redundancies. The Deputy Leader replied that she had not seen the letter and agreed to provide a written response to the supplementary question.

16 (h) From Cllr Mark Howell

What are the Leader's thoughts of our refuse collectors threatening strike action due to "insulting pay offer"?

The Chair noted in the absence of Councillor Mark Howell that he had requested a written response.

16 (i) From Cllr Sue Ellington

Is the Leader planning any cabinet reshuffles anytime soon?

The Deputy Leader stated that no Cabinet reshuffle was planned. Councillor Sue Ellington expressed concern at the cost of the poster in reception depicting the Cabinet member and their roles, so she hoped that there would not be any changes soon.

16 (j) From Cllr Richard Stobart

Can the Council Leader please explain why seeking the support of residents when making radical changes to current transport practice is fundamental to the success of those changes?

Councillor Brian Milnes replied that it was important that the consultation process could influence decisions. Possible charges had to be linked to service improvements, including more buses and reduced fares. There was no supplementary question.

16 (k) From Cllr Dr Lisa Redrup

Given that the National Grid and UK Power Networks are advising that there will be constraints to supply, can the lead member for the environment please explain what contribution the Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network (WREN) will make to the electrification of the refuse collection vehicle fleet?

The Deputy Leader replied that if the Council was to meet its zero carbon targets, adequate electricity supply would be required from the national grid. The Greater Cambridge Partnership were looking at pump priming two extra stations to improve the grid and solar power plan was being planned at the Depot.

17. Notices of Motion

17 (a) Standing in the name of Councillor Pippa Heylings

Councillor Pippa Heylings explained that following the driest July for 20 years the level of faecal bacteria in chalk streams had increased, as low river flow meant that pollution was more concentrated. It was clear that legislation passed last year had not addressed the problem and water companies had factored the expected costs of fines into their budgets. Councillor Heylings asserted that only by making the company directors criminally liable would the issue be addressed.

Councillor Geoff Harvey seconded this motion. He stated that the Environment Agency had been very critical of Anglian Water and the CEO of this organisation was in denial of the facts. The storm overflow drains were no longer fit for purpose and greater regulation was required.

Councillor Lina Nieto proposed the following amendments:

- Add as a fourth paragraph "This Council recognises that, to overcome river pollution, partnership work between local authorities with key stakeholders is critical because pollution takes place from multiple

sources.”

- Amend final bullet point to read “... call on Cambridgeshire MPs to urgently seek the support necessary for public-private investment ...”

These amendments were agreed by the proposer and seconder of the original motion without debate.

Councillor Daniel Lentell expressed his support for the motion. He stated that his experience of the gas and oil industry indicated that criminal liability for directors was an effective way of ensuring compliance with environmental legislation. He expressed the hope that the cleanliness of the county's rivers would improve.

Councillor Heather Williams welcomed the cross-party support of this amended motion. She thanked councillors and the local MPs for their work on this important issue.

Councillor Brian Milnes lamented the decline in water standards, which had been upheld by the European Union's blue flags scheme. He expressed his wholehearted support for the motion.

Councillor Pippa Heylings stated that water monitoring was vital to ensure that water was safe for humans and the natural habitat. She expressed her concern that water companies were more concerned with profit than maintaining high water standards and so more regulation was needed.

Councillor Pippa Heylings proposed and Councillor Geoff Harvey seconded the amended motion. A vote was taken and by affirmation

Council **agreed** the following motion:

Despite repeated calls to put a stop to the dumping raw sewage in our precious rivers and chalk streams, the latest annual assessment (published this July) by the Environment Agency showed a “shocking” decline in performance¹ on pollution for most of England's water and sewage companies, much worse than previous years. Anglian Water was given just 2 stars for performance for 2021, meaning they require significant improvement.

South Cambridgeshire residents are rightly concerned about the health implications of the poor water quality in our chalk streams especially at a time in hot summer months when local children and families would expect to be able to bathe and enjoy nature-rich river banks.

The latest study by Cam Valley Forum² has shown that the levels of E.coli are highest downstream of Anglian Water's small sewage works in and around our villages, such as the one at Haslingfield, that are frequently discharging raw, untreated sewage into the rivers Mel, Rhee and Granta through 'storm

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/water-and-sewerage-company-performance-on-pollution-hits-new-low>

² <https://camvalleyforum.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/20403-CVF-Report-on-faecal-indicator-bacteria-counts-in-a-sample-taken-from-the-effluent-at-Haslingfield-STW-during-a-storm-overflow-3rd-March-2022-CSSI.pdf>

overflows³. The study points to the disturbing fact that when river levels are lower during the dry summer months, more of the chalk streams would be composed of effluent from the sewage plant and could, potentially, cause a risk to bathers' health.

In June 2022, despite further information received from the water company, Ofwat decided to continue its enforcement case⁴ against Anglian Water due to serious concerns about its compliance with the requirements of their environmental permits⁵, particularly because of a lack of effective water quality monitoring and no immediate action plan in place.

This Council recognises that, to overcome river pollution, partnership work between local authorities with key stakeholders is critical because pollution takes place from multiple sources.

This Council agrees:

- to support the chair of the Environment Agency's call for increased criminal liability for the Chief Executives and Boards of water companies because they remain undeterred by the penalties currently being issued by the courts.
- to ask the CEO to write to the Secretary of State for DEFRA and the CEO of Ofwat asking them to introduce legally-binding targets for intermediate and ultimately zero discharges and a sewage tax on discharges.
- To ask Cabinet to consider the possibility of a formal application to Defra for an inland bathing water stretch along the River Cam in South Cambridgeshire, together with Anglian Water and local partners such as Cam Valley Forum; this would require the water company to undertake water quality sampling and monitoring for at least a year.
- That, given the seriously water-stressed status in our region, the CEO and Leader will call on Cambridgeshire MPs to urgently seek the support necessary for public-private investment in the regional scale water supply infrastructure called for in the Integrated Water Study evidence base for the draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

17 (b) Standing in the name of Cllr Bill Handley

In the absence of Councillor Bill Handley, Councillor John Williams proposed this motion. He explained that the existence of a cost of living crisis was undeniable, which would be exacerbated by the coming winter. In his view the Government's proposed mini-budget would not benefit those on low income in the District. He

³ Anglian Water acknowledges that *"storm overflows are no longer fit for purpose, especially as our climate is changing and extreme weather is more commonplce"*.
<https://www.cambridgeindependent.co.uk/news/river-cam-study-finds-massively-raised-counts-of-faecal-ba-9254432/>

⁴ <https://www.ofwat.gov.uk/investigation-into-sewage-treatment-works/#responses>

⁵ The number and length of sewage dumps from storm overflows is measured by Event Duration Monitors (EDMs). However, analysis of Environment Agency data reveals water companies have either installed monitors which do not work 90% of the time, or have simply not installed the monitors at all. The worst offender is Anglian Water, which saw half (49%) of sewage discharges not measured due to faulty monitors or no monitors installed.

explained that the motion was in two parts. The first part called on the Government to take action and the second part focussed on what the Council could do to assist its residents.

Councillor Pippa Heylings proposed the following amendments to the motion:

Paragraph v under the first heading to be amended to: "Supplement the October energy price freeze with i) increase in the financial support to households that rely on oil for heating and help families spread the cost over the year: ii) increase targeted support for vulnerable and low income households by doubling the Warm Homes Discount to £300 and extending it to all those on Universal Credit and Pensioner Credit, whilst iii) investing in insulating leaky homes to bring down costs in the long term."

Councillor John William agreed this amendment, which was accepted without debate.

Councillor Pippa Heylings stated that energy bills had doubled since last year. 17% of residents relied on oil for their heating and the proposed £100 subsidy for them was insufficient. In the longer term, the insulation of the District's building could be improved. She concluded that food banks had become a vital safety net for many residents and so should be supported.

Councillor Dr John Loveluck expressed his support for the motion. He expressed concern that those in mobile homes who relied on bottled gas were being overlooked.

Councillor Stephen Drew supported the motion but was ashamed that so many residents had become reliant on food banks.

Councillor Heather Williams proposed and Councillor Graham Cone seconded the following amendments

- "Chief Executive" is amended to Leader"
- The word "considers" is added to the last sentence before the numbered points.
- The first paragraph i is amended to "Reassessing the VAT rate on a goods or service basis".
- Paragraph v is removed.
- The following is added to the second paragraph ii: "council housing rents and waste collection charges".
- Followed by the addition of the following paragraph iii "be mindful of the Cost of Living crisis in the setting of next year's community room charges for sheltered housing tenants;"
- Add the following paragraph x:: "And will oppose the introduction of congestion charging in Cambridge"

Councillor Heather Williams stated that the motion was clearly political and the purpose of the motion was to mitigate this. In her view the letter should be sent by the Leader not the Chief Executive and VAT charges on luxury items should remain at 20%. The congestion charge should be opposed as it will add to the

cost of living crisis.

Councillor John Williams announced that he did not support the proposed amendments. Councillor Pippa Heylings explained that unfortunately due to Government policy the setting of rent for council housing was not controlled by local authorities. Councillor John Williams explained that it would take approximately a year to change VAT and the proposed congestion charge would go out to public consultation, which should not be prejudged.

A vote on the proposed amendments was taken and were cast as follows

In favour (5):

Councillors Dr Shrobona Bhattacharya, Graham Cone, Sue Ellington, Bunty Waters and Heather Williams.

Against (21):

Councillors John Batchelor, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Stephen Drew, Peter Fane, Corinne Garvie, Sunita Hansraj, Geoff Harvey, Dr Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, Dr James Hobro, Helene Leeming, Daniel Lentell, Dr John Loveluck, Brian Milnes, Dr Lisa Redrup, Judith Rippeth, Peter Sandford, Dr Aidan Van de Ven and John Williams

Abstain (0)

The amendment was **lost**.

Councillor John Williams proposed and Councillor Pippa Heylings proposed the amended motion. A vote was taken and were cast as follows:

In favour (21):

Councillors John Batchelor, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Stephen Drew, Peter Fane, Corinne Garvie, Sunita Hansraj, Geoff Harvey, Dr Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, Dr James Hobro, Helene Leeming, Daniel Lentell, Dr John Loveluck, Brian Milnes, Dr Lisa Redrup, Judith Rippeth, Peter Sandford, Dr Aidan Van de Ven and John Williams

Against (5):

Councillors Dr Shrobona Bhattacharya, Graham Cone, Sue Ellington, Bunty Waters and Heather Williams.

Abstain (0)

Council **agreed** the following motion:

Our country is in the grips of a cost of living emergency - like nothing that has been seen in generations with soaring inflation and the Bank of England predicting a recession this autumn.

Millions of families and pensioners are being forced to choose between heating and eating. And millions more are worried about how to pay their bills this winter,

with another staggering energy price rise just around the corner.

We already have a high cost of living in South Cambridgeshire and those of our residents on low incomes will face unprecedented hardship this winter.

Businesses are also impacted by the energy price rise and local traders are warning that many of them will not be able to survive the increase in costs without support.

In these circumstances this Council declares a 'Cost of Living Emergency'.

On behalf of South Cambridgeshire residents it instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Government to ask that it:

- i. Reduce the standard rate of VAT from 20 per cent to 17.5 per cent for one year, saving the average household in South Cambridgeshire a further £600 this year;
- ii. Re-introduce the pensions triple lock to support South Cambridgeshire pensioners;
- iii. Restore the Universal Credit supplement of £20, which was cancelled by the Government in September 2021;
- iv. Reverse cuts to Working Tax Credit;
- v. Supplement the October energy price freeze with i) increase in the financial support to households that rely on oil for heating and help families spread the cost over the year: ii) increase targeted support for vulnerable and low income households by doubling the Warm Homes Discount to £300 and extending it to all those on Universal Credit and Pensioner Credit, whilst iii) investing in insulating leaky homes to bring down costs in the long term.

While for its part, South Cambridgeshire District Council has already:

- i. Given advice in its quarterly publication, South Cambs Magazine, with particular regard to support provided by Cambridgeshire County Council and the Cambridgeshire Home improvement Agency;
- ii. Provided a Cost of Living Support page on its website to help local people find immediate support with food poverty, housing, debt, energy bills, transport, unemployment and health and wellbeing, whilst also signposting to grants and loans to help improve the energy efficiency of their homes;
- iii. Partnered Cambridgeshire ACRE in the provision of warm hubs in the District.

And will:

- i. Confirm its commitment to continue funding Citizen's Advice for this financial year (£85,000) to provide advice services to South Cambridgeshire residents;

- ii. Be mindful of the Cost of Living Crisis in the setting of next year's Council Tax;
- iii. Promote its Welfare and Money Maximisation Officer and Housing Tenant Advise Officers;
- iv. Ask the Lead Cabinet Member for Resources to consider bringing forward a proposal to amend the Local Council Tax Support Scheme in the district to 100% for working people, thereby reducing the council tax burden for working low income households;
- v. Ask the Grants Advisory Committee to review the Community Chest grant scheme to consider having applications that demonstrate not only wellbeing benefits to their community but also support for those on low incomes and make recommendations to the Lead Cabinet Member for Resources or Cabinet as appropriate;
- vi. Confirm its commitment to improve the energy efficiency of council homes as outlined in the HRA Asset Management Strategy;
- vii. Request that the Cabinet set up an advisory group reporting to it to monitor and propose support for those in the District struggling with the cost of living crisis including local businesses;
- viii. And work with partners to give access to affordable food across the District.

18. Chair's Engagements

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

The Meeting ended at 5.15 p.m.
