

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held on
Tuesday, 21 February 2023 at 2.00 p.m.

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

Councillors: Michael Atkins, Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Dr. Shrobona Bhattacharya, Tom Bygott, Ariel Cahn, Dr. Martin Cahn, Graham Cone, Libby Earle, Sue Ellington, Corinne Garvie, Jose Hales, Bill Handley, Sunita Hansraj, Sally Ann Hart, Geoff Harvey, Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, James Hobro, Carla Hofman, Mark Howell, Helene Leeming, Daniel Lentell, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Lina Nieto, Annika Osborne, Dr Lisa Redrup, Judith Rippeth, Bridget Smith, Richard Stobart, Dr Susan van de Ven, Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer, Natalie Warren-Green, Bunty Waters, Heather Williams, John Williams and Dr. Richard Williams

Officers:	Andrew Francis	Elections and Democratic Services Manager
	Peter Maddock	Head of Finance
	Rory McKenna	Monitoring Officer
	Liz Watts	Chief Executive

1. Apologies

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Stephen Drew, William Jackson-Wood and Peter Sandford.

2. Declaration of Interest

Councillor Sue Ellington declared an interest in agenda 10, as the member for Swavesey, though not a payer of the byeway rates.

Councillor Peter Fane declared an interest as director of Shire Homes. He left the room during agenda item 8, did not participate in the debate and did not vote.

Councillor Dr James Hobro declared an interest as a director of Ermine Street Housing. He left the room during agenda 8, did not participate in the debate and did not vote.

Councillor Mark Howell declared an interest as a member of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Councillor Lina Nieto declared an interest in agenda item 8g, Housing Revenue Account. She left the room whilst this item was discussed, did not participate in the debate and did not vote.

Councillor Richard Stobart declared an interest as a director of both South Cambs Investments Partnership and South Cambs Projects. He left the room during agenda item 8, did not participate in the debate and did not vote.

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

3. Register of Interests

The Chair reminded members that they should 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 24 November 2022 were agreed as a correct record by affirmation.

It was agreed that Councillor Heather Williams should receive answers to the questions recorded in the minutes on page 21 and 27 of the agenda.

5. Announcements

The Chair reported the death of former Councillor Richard Summerfield. He served as a councillor from 1995 to 2010 for the Milton ward. He had a keen interest in the financial matters of the Council and had served as the Council's first Finance Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Bridget Smith, the Leader of the Council, spoke of the sad and untimely death of Councillor Dr John Loveluck. His life had been celebrated at his funeral, where his family had spoken of their pride in his election as a councillor. He had done much for his community and was considered an exemplar of what a councillor should be.

Council had a moment's silence to remember councillors Loveluck and Summerfield.

Councillor Bill Handley stated that Friday would be the 1st anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine. The Council had welcomed approximately 800 refugees, which was the largest number for any district in the country. He thanked the officers for their hard work and expressed his gratitude to the residents who had invited Ukrainians into their homes. There would be a national one minute silence on Friday at 11 am.

6. Questions From the Public

The Chair explained that a request to speak from a member of the public had been refused as it did not accord with the Council's public speaking scheme.

Nick Burton, of the Stop the Arc Group, stated that Councillor Bridget Smith had commented on social media on 28 April 2022 that the Government's plans for the

Oxford Cambridge Arc had been dropped and the reports of a million new homes in the area were nonsense. Mr Burton stated that Councillor Smith was the Council's representative on the leaders' group of the Arc and remained on the shadow board. He announced housing figures which indicated that the district's share of the proposed one million new homes in the area were on target to be achieved but there was insufficient funding from Government for the infrastructure required. He asked if Councillor Smith considered her post on 28 April 2022 to be misleading and to explain what housing the Oxford Cambridge Arc sought to deliver.

The Leader replied that at the time of writing, Mr Gove had indeed indicated that the Arc would no longer be progressed by the Government. Since then a more locally led pan regional partnership had received government funding, as set out in item 16 of this agenda. The Leader explained that her involvement in the Environment Working Group had been to continue to push for environmental improvements across the region, at a strategic level, to ensure that the Arc made the most of the opportunities for large scale environmental improvements, and for more joined up working across all authorities. The Leaders stated that the pan regional partnership had two key work strands – economy and environment, and aimed to harness the area's incredible talent and innovation by championing the region as a world leader in research and innovation in hi-tech, high performance technology and manufacturing and acting to achieve environmentally sustainable and inclusive growth.

In response to the reference Mr Burton made to housing numbers, the Leader explained that this Council had not relied on the work of others, but instead to commission its own evidence on housing need, focussing on how the Greater Cambridge economy will grow in the future. The Council published evidence a few weeks ago that detailed the methodology that has been employed and the efforts made by our officers to provide the most accurate forecast possible for what will happen to jobs across our area up to 2041. The evidence concludes that in addition to the 37,200 homes already provided for in the adopted 2018 Local Plans, economic growth in the area indicated that the Council should plan for a further 19,700 additional homes. In the first proposals consultation in 2021, the authority suggested sites where some 11,500 of these new homes could be delivered.

The Leader stated that the Council had identified challenges in respect of future water supply and that until the authority could secure greater certainty around the resolution of this matter it would not commit to any more homes beyond those in the local plans. However, it was important to recognise that not providing enough homes to meet the needs of the new workers in the area would also have consequences, such as increasing commuting, higher carbon emissions, and further increases in housing costs. The Leader explained that this was why the Council was seeking to use every avenue it could to work with partners, including the Arc, to firstly identify the infrastructure required across this area and to then lobby Government with one locally representative voice, for the critical funding, which was required to underpin sustainable future growth in our area.

Nick Burton asked if development did not go ahead because of inadequate water

supply, would the promised investment funding be allocated elsewhere. The Leader explained that water supply was essential to new developments above those already agreed in the adopted local plans, but it was the responsibility of the water companies and the Government. Partnership working was required to deliver development and the supporting infrastructure. The Leader concluded that she was happy to speak to Mr Burton's group on this matter. The Pan Regional Partnership now had a website and the agendas and minutes of its meetings were now in the public domain.

7. Petitions

No petition had been received.

8. To Consider the Following Recommendations:

8 (a) Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-2028 (Cabinet 12 December 2022)

Councillor John Williams, Lead Member for Resources, presented this report, which reviewed the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy that had been updated to 2027/28 following the outcome of a mid-year review of financial forecasts and projected changes in services spending. He explained that the predicted deficit had been reduced to just over £7m at the end of the five-year period to just under £4m. This was due to a delay in the expected reduction in business rates until 2025/26. It was expected that this would cost the authority a total of £5.8m. It was therefore important that the long term plan to increase Council Tax and achieve savings through the Transformation Plan was adhered to.

Councillor Heather Williams stated that previous years' reports to Council had highlighted the fact that it was becoming increasingly difficult to make savings that did not have a detrimental impact on the Council's services. She concluded that the £2m savings proposed in the report would impact on vital services for residents and so she could not support the recommendations. Councillor John Williams assured Council that new technology, including Artificial Intelligence, would allow the authority to make savings by being more efficient, which would not affect the quality of services to residents. He explained that a lack of clarity regarding the Government's plans and the delay of the implementation of the fair funding review made it very difficult for the Council to have an accurate five-year Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Councillor Tom Bygott asked if the table in paragraph 25 on page 41 of the agenda was hiding a budget gap that would increase in time. Councillor John Williams explained that Government would not indicate the results of its fair funding review until December this year and the figures in the report were the best forecast that the Council could make with the available data.

Councillor John Williams proposed and Councillor Peter McDonald seconded the proposals in the report. A vote was taken and were cast as follows:

In favour (28):

Councillors Michael Atkins, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Libby Earle, Peter Fane, Corinne Garvie, Jose Hales, Bill Handley, Sally Ann Hart, Sunita Hansraj, Geoff Harvey, Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, Carla Hofman, Helene Leeming, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Annika Osborne, Dr Lisa Redrup, Judith Rippeth, Bridget Smith, Susan van de Ven, Dr Aidan Van de Weyer, Natalie Warren-Green and John Williams

Against (9):

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

Abstain (0)

Council

Agreed to

- A)** Acknowledge the projected changes in service spending and the overall resources available to the Council over the medium-term to 2025/2028.
- B)** Approve the refreshed Medium Term Financial Strategy at Appendix A and updated financial forecast at Appendix B.

8 (b) New Build Council Housing Strategy 2020-25 (Cabinet, 6 February 2023)

Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Member for Housing, presented this report that proposed a mid-term update on the New Build Council Housing Strategy 2020-25, which acknowledged the achievement of the previous target and sets targets for the next two years in light of changed economic circumstances. He indicated that the Council had successfully met its target of doubling the number of new homes it delivers from 35 to 70 two years early and in recognition of this it made sense to increase the target to 75 homes for the two remaining years of the Strategy.

Councillor John Batchelor explained that the proposal to increase the modelling period for payback from 35 to 45 years would give the Council more flexibility in future negotiations, as Housing Associations in the District were operating with a 50 year payback period and this authority needed to remain competitive.

Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins seconded the recommendations in the report. She praised the cooperation between housing officers and planning officers when locating appropriate sites for building new homes.

Councillor Mark Howell expressed his support for the recommendations in the report and whilst regrettable, he recognised the need to increase the payback period to 45 years. He hoped that the Council would continue to utilise the land it owned to build new council homes.

Councillor Brian Milnes thanked housing officers for their work in building new homes. He explained that 60 new energy efficient homes had been built in Sawston, which ensured lower energy bills for its residents.

Councillor Heather Williams supported the recommendations in the report. She stated that the Council was fortunate to have its housing stock and praised those who had taken the difficult decision to retain it.

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

Council

Agreed to approve the updates to the New Build Council Housing Strategy 2020-25, including

- A) Setting the target annual completions for 2023-24 and 2024-25 at 75 homes per year; and
- B) Increasing the modelling period for payback from 35 to 45 years.

8 (c) Business Plan Action Plan - 2023-24 (Cabinet 6 February 2023)

The Leader presented this report on the annual review of the Business Plan Action Plan. The updated version of the Plan aimed to provide clear priorities that will ensure that the Council could easily monitor the progress and delivery of the agreed actions. The Leader thanked the Senior Policy and Performance Officer for a concise, informative and readable report.

Councillor Graham Cone asked whether the Council should be spending money continuing the trial of the four-day week. The Leader explained that that the Chief Executive had given a presentation on this matter the day before. The aim of the four-day week was to increase performance and productivity and the trial was essential as it would evaluate the impact of this initiative and ensure that the Council made the correct decision on whether to make it permanent.

Councillor Heather Williams asked which budget was being used to pay for the Business Plan. Councillor Peter McDonald believed that the Plan was mostly funded from the shared prosperity fund, but he agreed to provide Councillor Heather Williams with a more detailed breakdown of the data.

The Leader explained that the Council had made the decision in 2018 to develop an economic strategy and the authority's response to Covid-19 had validated this decision.

Councillor Mark Howell asked for an update on Cambourne High Street. Councillor Peter McDonald explained that £1.76m was available in the shared prosperity fund until 2025 and this could be used for high street development. He encouraged local members to apply for the fund and encouraged Councillor Howell to liaise with him outside the meeting with regards to Cambourne High

Street.

Councillor Dr Martin Cahn expressed his support for the inclusion of the Cultural Strategy in the report, which had been delayed due to the impact of Covid-19 and the situation in Ukraine.

The Leader proposed and Councillor Brian Milnes seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and were cast as follows:

In favour (27):

Councillors Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Libby Earle, Peter Fane, Corinne Garvie, Jose Hales, Bill Handley, Sally Ann Hart, Sunita Hansraj, Geoff Harvey, Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, Helene Leeming, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Annika Osborne, Dr Lisa Redrup, Judith Rippeth, Bridget Smith, Susan van de Ven, Dr Aidan Van de Weyer, Natalie Warren-Green and John Williams

Against (10):

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

Abstain (0)

Council

Agreed to

- A)** Consider and approve the proposed Business Plan Action Plan for 2023-24 at Appendix A.
- B)** Authorise the Chief Executive to make any minor wording changes required to final draft, in consultation with the Leader.

8 (d) Capital Strategy (Cabinet 6 February 2023)

Councillor John Williams presented this report, which recommended that Council agree an updated Capital Strategy, which set the policy framework for the development, management and monitoring of capital investment. He highlighted amendments detailed in paragraphs 7.4 and 7.5 of the report, which were due to changes introduced by the Government.

Councillor Heather Williams welcomed the reduction in the capital programme in relation to the investment strategy, as detailed in page 121 of the report, but she still found the authorised limit unacceptable. She asked for assurance that the Council was not borrowing money for revenue expenditure and that short-term debts would be repaid and not refinanced. Councillor John Williams assured Council that funds were not being borrowed for revenue spending. He explained that whether the authority decided to pay off an outstanding debt from reserves or take out another loan would depend on the circumstances at the time, such as

the current interest rate.

Councillor John Williams proposed and Councillor Peter McDonald seconded the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and were cast as follows:

In favour (27):

Councillors Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Libby Earle, Peter Fane, Corinne Garvie, Jose Hales, Bill Handley, Sally Ann Hart, Sunita Hansraj, Geoff Harvey, Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, Helene Leeming, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Annika Osborne, Dr Lisa Redrup, Judith Rippeth, Bridget Smith, Susan van de Ven, Dr Aidan Van de Weyer, Natalie Warren-Green and John Williams

Against (10):

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

Abstain (0)

Council

Agreed to approve the updated Capital Strategy attached at Appendix A to the report, which sets the policy framework for the development, management and monitoring of capital investment, including Prudential Indicators.

8 (e) Treasury Management Strategy (Cabinet 6 February 2023)

Councillor John Williams presented this report, which invited Council to agree the updated Treasury Management Strategy. It was noted that the Strategy had been affected by the recent increase in inflation. Councillor John Williams explained that the Council had decided to add three overseas banks on the list of possible providers for the authority. Councillor Tom Bygott reminded Council of the impact on other local authorities' finances by the collapse of the Icelandic banks and asked for assurance that it was prudent for the Council to invest with overseas banks. Councillor John Williams replied that overseas banks were being considered, as they were offering a better return than the domestic banks. He assured Council that the administration would ensure that any investments made would be with banks that would not default.

Councillor Sue Ellington expressed concern at the level of external borrowing. Councillor John Williams explained that the largest loan was from the Public Work Loans Board and that other borrowing was to fund commercial investments that brought the Council income well in excess of the interest charged on the loan. Councillor Heather Williams asked whether it was prudent to increase the levelling of borrowing in the current financial climate. Councillor John Williams reiterated that Ermine Street Housing and commercial investments were bringing in much needed income to the Council. Councillor Mark Howell thanked all those involved in the success of Ermine Street Housing.

Councillor John Williams proposed and Councillor Brian Milnes seconded the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and were cast as follows:

In favour (28):

Councillors Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Libby Earle, Peter Fane, Corinne Garvie, Jose Hales, Bill Handley, Sally Ann Hart, Sunita Hansraj, Geoff Harvey, Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, Helene Leeming, Daniel Lentell, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Annika Osborne, Dr Lisa Redrup, Judith Rippeth, Bridget Smith, Susan van de Ven, Dr Aidan Van de Weyer, Natalie Warren-Green and John Williams

Against (9):

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

Abstain (0)

Council

Agreed to approve the updated Treasury Management Strategy attached at Appendix A to the report which sets the policy framework for the Council's treasury management activity, including (i) the Treasury Management Policy Statement, (ii) Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and (iii) Treasury indicators.

8 (f) Review of Revenue Reserves and Provisions (Cabinet 6 February 2023)

Councillor John Williams presented the report, which sought Council's approval for the level and allocation of the Council's Earmarked Revenue Reserves as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process. Councillor Heather Williams explained that the Conservative Group would oppose the recommendations in the report due to concerns over the investment strategy.

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 (28):

Councillors Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Libby Earle, Peter Fane, Corinne Garvie, Jose Hales, Bill Handley, Sally Ann Hart, Sunita Hansraj, Geoff Harvey, Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, Helene Leeming, Daniel Lentell, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Annika Osborne, Dr Lisa Redrup, Judith Rippeth, Bridget Smith, Susan van de Ven, Dr Aidan Van de Weyer, Natalie Warren-Green and John Williams

Against (9):

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

Abstain (0)

Council

Agreed

- A)** That the Reserves as summarised at paragraph 11 of the report be released to the General Fund, or transferred to other Earmarked Reserves as shown, on 31 March 2023.
- B)** That the IT software and hardware reserves be amalgamated at 31 March 2023 to provide the necessary flexibility.
- C)** That the movement in Reserves in 2022/2023 as set out in Appendix A, and the estimated balance of Reserves of £29.830 million (+), be noted.

8 (g) Capital Programme 2023/24 - 2027/28 (Cabinet 6 February 2023)

Councillor John Williams presented this report, which sought Council's approval of the General Fund Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2027/28. Councillor Heather Williams expressed concern regarding an increase in borrowing.

Councillor John Williams proposed and Councillor Peter McDonald seconded the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and were cast as follows:

In favour (28):

Councillors Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Libby Earle, Peter Fane, Corinne Garvie, Jose Hales, Bill Handley, Sally Ann Hart, Sunita Hansraj, Geoff Harvey, Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, Helene Leeming, Daniel Lentell, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Annika Osborne, Dr Lisa Redrup, Judith Rippeth, Bridget Smith, Susan van de Ven, Dr Aidan Van de Weyer, Natalie Warren-Green and John Williams

Against (9):

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

Abstain (0)

Council

Agreed to approve the General Fund Capital Programme following a detailed review of the rolling programme by Cabinet at its meeting on 06 February 2023.

8 (h) Localised Council Tax Support 2023/24 (Cabinet 6 February 2023)

Councillor John Williams presented this report, which invited Council to approve the Localised Council Tax Support scheme for 2023/24. He expressed support for Option 1 in the report that continued the scheme with minor amendments that would allow more residents to benefit from the scheme. This option was recommended by Cabinet. Councillor John Batchelor praised the scheme which would benefit those residents working on low incomes. Councillor Heather Williams welcomed the recent workshop and expressed her support for the scheme.

Councillor John Williams proposed and Councillor John Batchelor seconded the recommendation. A vote was taken and by affirmation

Council

Agreed to approve Scheme Option 1 which comprised the LCTS Income Band scheme currently in operation and increased working age scheme to a maximum 100% reduction for all working age claimants, with an uprating of calculation annually in line with CPI in September adjustment to earnings disregarding increasing support to those who are working.

8 (i) General Fund Budget 2023/24 (Cabinet 6 February 2023)

The Chair proposed and the Leader seconded the appointment of Councillor Sally Ann Hart as Vice-Chair for this item.

Councillor John Williams presented this item, which proposed that Council approve the 2023/24 General Fund Revenue Budget. He explained that the proposed Council Tax increase equated to a 3.1% increase for a Band D property at a time when inflation was at 10.1% and salary increases were at 6.49% so the Council Tax increase was a reduction in real terms. To decide against an increase would widen the projected deficit in the Medium Term Financial Strategy that Council had just agreed.

Councillor Heather Williams proposed and Councillor Graham Cone seconded the following amendment:

- Freeze Council Tax
- Additional funding of £50,000 for fraud prevention and investigation
- £45,300 be allocated for an additional planning enforcement (compliance) officer
- Funding these proposals by allowing councillors to receive only one Special Responsibility Allowance, reducing the number of South Cambs Magazines to two a year and meeting the remaining cost from the transformation reserve.

Councillor Heather Williams stated that Council had agreed a recent motion stating that there was a cost of living emergency but this was inconsistent with increasing Council Tax by the maximum amount allowable. It was also clear that the Council would benefit from strengthening its planning enforcement and fraud prevention service. She asserted that councillors did not need to receive up to

two Special Responsibility Allowances. Councillor John Williams explained that the Government had reduced its grants to the Council and he reiterated that the Council Tax increase was far less than inflation. Councillor Mark Howell stated that all of Councillor John Williams predecessors would agree that the Government does not provide enough funding to the Council, but at least the authority knew what the rules were before setting its Council Tax. He concluded that due to the cost of living crisis the authority should freeze its Council Tax and show its residents that we are represent them. Councillor Judith Rippeth stated that the average increase in Council Tax was no more than 10p per week but was required to allow the Council to deliver essential services. Councillor Daniel Lentell announced that he would support the amendment as residents were facing an additional tax from the Combined Authority and faced the possibility of a future congestion charge. He asserted that the Council should set a good example by freezing its Council Tax.

The Leader explained that some of the District's most vulnerable residents relied on South Cambs Magazine and the proposed Council Tax increase would allow the authority to fund initiatives that would assist those on the lowest incomes. Councillor Sally Ann Hart agreed that South Cambs Magazine was important to residents, evidenced by the complaints received if a road did not get their magazine delivered.

Councillor Tom Bygott asserted that the Council's Planning Enforcement service needed more resources to prevent illegal planning in the District. Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins explained that the Planning Enforcement team had installed a new ICT system which would improve efficiency. The vacancy in the team had been filled and the number of cases since 2020 had dropped, so she was confident that the section had enough resources.

Councillor Graham Cone supported the amendment, as it was what his residents wanted. He asserted that the proposal merely reduced the number of South Cambs Magazines delivered every year and the Council had enough money to continue to deliver essential services without having to increase Council Tax.

A vote was taken on this Amendment and were cast as follows:

In favour (10):

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

Against (24):

Councillors Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Dr Martin Cahn, Libby Earle, Corinne Garvie, Jose Hales, Bill Handley, Sally Ann Hart, Sunita Hansraj, Geoff Harvey, Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, Helene Leeming, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Dr Lisa Redrup, Judith Rippeth, Bridget Smith, Susan van de Ven, Dr Aidan Van de Weyer, Natalie Warren-Green and John Williams

Abstain (1):

Councillor Ariel Cahn

The amendment was **Rejected**.

Councillor Dr Richard Williams expressed concern that according to page 193 of the agenda the expenditure on the planning service was being reduced to below that of 2021/22. Councillor John Williams agreed to provide more details on this, which he thought was related to the transformation project.

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

In favour (24):

Councillors Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Libby Earle, Corinne Garvie, Jose Hales, Bill Handley, Sally Ann Hart, Sunita Hansraj, Geoff Harvey, Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, Helene Leeming, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Dr Lisa Redrup, Judith Rippeth, Bridget Smith, Susan van de Ven, Dr Aidan Van de Weyer, Natalie Warren-Green and John Williams

Against (10):

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

Abstain (0)

Council

Agreed to

- A)** Take into account the detailed budgets presented at Appendix B, and summarised at Appendix A, with an estimated General Fund Gross Operating Expenditure for 2023/2024 of £84.868 million, estimated Gross Operating Income of £54.622 million and estimated General Fund Net Operating Expenditure of £30.246 million.
- B)** Acknowledge the key factors which have led to the proposed 2023/2024 General Fund Revenue Budget, with service pressures summarised at Appendix C and offsetting efficiency savings/policy options summarised at Appendix D.
- C)** Acknowledge that the 2023/2024 General Fund Revenue Budget gross expenditure is covered by forecast income sources (assuming no change in Government grant) and, therefore, any addition(s) to expenditure that are made by the Cabinet or Council will need to be met from the General Fund Balance.
- D)** Approve the 2022/2023 General Fund Revenue Budget taking into

account the statement by the Chief Finance Officer on the risks and robustness of the estimates as required under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 (reproduced at Appendix F).

- E)** Set the Council Tax Requirement for 2023/2024 at £11,130,440.
- F)** Approve an increase in the District element of the Council Tax of £5 per annum, giving an average Band D Council Tax of £165.31, plus the relevant amounts required by the precepts of the Parish Councils, Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Police & Crime Commissioner, and the Cambridgeshire Fire Authority.
- G)** Approve the estimates of the amounts required to be made under the Non-domestic Rating (Rates Retention) Regulations 2013 as set out in paragraphs 38 and 39.
- H)** Approve the use of the additional income from the Business Rate Pool, estimated at £1,000,000 in 2023/2024, for transfer to the established Renewables Reserve for priority projects.
- I)** Council approved:
 - 1) The 2023/2024 General Fund Revenue Budget based on known commitments at this time and planned levels of Service/functions resulting in a Budget Requirement of £32.918 million.
 - 2) The District Council Precept on the Collection Fund (Council Tax Requirement) of £11.130 million in 2023/2024 (based on the Provisional Government Settlement) and a Band D Council Tax of £165.31.

8 (j) Housing Revenue Account Budget 2023/24 (Cabinet 6 February 2023)

Councillor John Williams presented this report, which recommended that Council approve the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue and Capital Budget for 2023/24. He explained that the HRA was ring fenced and so all maintenance work on the housing stock and building of new affordable homes had to be funded via rent. He concluded that the Council had to increase its rent by 7%. He was pleased to report that since 2018 the Council had increased its housing stock by 110 units, reversing a yearly loss due to the right to buy. Councillor John Batchelor explained that 25% of the HRA costs were spent on the loan forced on the Council to keep its housing stock, 46% on maintenance and 15% on new build. So over 60% of costs faced inflationary pressures. With a 7% increase in rent the Council was projected to cover its costs and so he supported the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Heather Williams reminded Council that the Conservative Group had proposed an amendment that would have frozen rent at September's Council meeting. The proposed increase would fall on residents who were on the lowest

income and unlike Council Tax there were no separate bands for rent. She requested that Council vote separately on recommendations (a) to (f) and recommendations (g) to (i) so that the Conservative Group could support the parts of the HRA not related to the 7% increase.

Councillor Pippa Heylings explained that she was on the cross party national board for housing, which had agreed that a 7% increase in rent was necessary.

Councillor Mark Howell asked that the Council not increase rent and suggested that the authority's garages should be converted into council housing. Councillor Daniel Lentell agreed with Councillor Howell and he suggested that the Council had other options to increasing rent.

The Leader explained that the funding from rent was required to make housing more energy efficient which would reduce cost for residents.

Councillor Sue Ellington asked for an explanation for the 577% increase in communal heating costs at Elm Court care home. Councillor Brian Milnes suggested that this was because the three year fixed tariff had ended. It was noted that an explanation was provided on page 260 of the agenda.

Councillor John Williams proposed and Councillor John Batchelor seconded the recommendations in the report. The Chair agreed to call for two separate votes. A vote was taken on recommendations (a) to (f) and were cast as follows:

In favour (25):

Councillors Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Libby Earle, Peter Fane, Corinne Garvie, Jose Hales, Bill Handley, Sally Ann Hart, Sunita Hansraj, Geoff Harvey, Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, Helene Leeming, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Dr Lisa Redrup, Judith Rippeth, Bridget Smith, Susan van de Ven, Natalie Warren-Green and John Williams

Against (9):

Councillors Dr Shrobona Bhattacharya, Tom Bygott, Graham Cone, Sue Ellington, Mark Howell, Daniel Lentell, Bunty Waters, Dr Richard Williams and Heather Williams.

Abstain (0)

A vote was taken on paragraphs (g) to (i) which were agreed by affirmation.

Council therefore

Agreed to

Housing Revenue Account (HRA): Revenue

- A)** Approve the HRA revenue budget for 2023/2024 as shown in the HRA Budget Summary as presented at **Appendix A**.

HRA: Review of Rents and Charges

- B)** Approve that council dwelling rents for all social rented properties be increased by 7%, recognising that inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) at September 2022, plus 1% would result in an increase of 11.1%, but that the government has introduced a cap on rent increases at 7% from April 2023.
- C)** Approve that affordable rents (inclusive of service charge) are also increased by 7% in line with the increase for social rents.
- D)** Approve that rents for affordable shared ownership properties are increased by 7% or RPI at January 2023 plus 0.5% whichever is the lower, from April 2023, recognising that although the government rent cap does not apply to this tenure, an increase of in excess of 7% may put undue financial pressure on these households.
- E)** Approve that garage rents be increased by 7% in line with the increase for social rents.
- F)** Approve the proposed service charges for HRA services and facilities provided to both tenants and leaseholders, as shown in **Appendix D**.

HRA: Capital

- G)** Approve the required level of funding for new build investment between 2023/2024 and 2027/2028 to ensure that commitments can be met in respect of the investment of all right to buy receipts currently retained or anticipated to be received by the authority for this period. This expenditure will take the form of HRA new build, with the 60% top up met by other HRA resources.
- H)** Approve the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy forecasts as shown in **Appendix B**.
- I)** Approve the Housing Capital Programme as shown in **Appendix C**.

9. Council Tax Resolution

Councillor John Williams introduced this report, which sought agreement for the Council Tax resolution for 2023/24 detailed at Appendix A. Councillor Heather Williams explained that for reasons already stated the Conservative Group could not support this recommendation.

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

In favour (27):

Councillors Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam,

Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Libby Earle, Peter Fane, Corinne Garvie, Jose Hales, Bill Handley, Sally Ann Hart, Sunita Hansraj, Geoff Harvey, Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, James Hobro, Helene Leeming, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Dr Lisa Redrup, Judith Rippeth, Bridget Smith, Richard Stobart, Susan van de Ven, Natalie Warren-Green and John Williams

Against (10):

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

Abstain (0)

Council

Agreed to approve the formal Council Tax resolution for 2023/24.

10. Swavesey Byeways Rate 2023/24

Councillor Henry Batchelor presented this report on the recommendation from the Swavesey Bye-ways Committee that the level of the Bye-ways rate remain at £1.20 per hectare for 2023/24. He thanked officers and the local member Councillor Sue Ellington for their work on this matter. Councillor Sue Ellington thanked officers for their efforts in ensuring that the Committee could make a sensible recommendation that all the landowners could agree to.

Councillor Henry Batchelor proposed and Councillor Sue Ellington seconded the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and by affirmation:

Council

Agreed to retain the level of the Swavesey Bye-ways rate at £1.20 per hectare for land with the charge paying area for the period 2023/24 in order to fund the required level of maintenance.

11. Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel - Members' Allowances Scheme 2022/23

The Elections and Democratic Services Manager presented this report on the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel in respect of the Members' Allowances Scheme 2022/23 following their meeting on 7 February 2023. It was noted that Council had asked the Panel provide more information at its previous meeting.

Councillor Heather Williams proposed that the Council agree no increase in the Members' Allowances Scheme 2022/23, as there had been insufficient consultation with councillors to justify the increase. Councillor Mark Howell agreed with Councillor Heather Williams and stated that due to the increase in the cost of living he could not support an increase in councillors' allowances. The Chair explained that this proposal did not require a separate amendment as it

equated to voting against the proposed recommendations in the report.

Councillor Daniel Lentell stated that Council had just agreed increases in Council Tax and rent for its residents and could not support increase the allowances paid to members.

Councillor Brian Milnes explained that there were only two months left before the end of the financial year and so there was insufficient time to carry out detailed research for the 2022/23 Members' Allowances Scheme. He was supportive of the Independent Remuneration Panel doing a more in depth review of the 2023/24 Members' Allowances Scheme.

The Leader stated that there were major discrepancies between the allowances paid to different authorities, which was a matter recognised by the LGA. She supported a modest increase in the allowances as otherwise those on lower incomes would be unable to stand to be councillors.

The Chair proposed and Councillor Peter Fane seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and were cast as follows:

In favour (28):

Councillors Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Libby Earle, Peter Fane, Corinne Garvie, Jose Hales, Bill Handley, Sally Ann Hart, Sunita Hansraj, Geoff Harvey, Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, James Hobro, Helene Leeming, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Dr Lisa Redrup, Judith Rippeth, Bridget Smith, Richard Stobart, Susan van de Ven, Natalie Warren-Green and John Williams

Against (10):

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

Abstain (0)

Council

Agreed to

- A)** Approve a revised Scheme of Members' Allowances for 2022/23 (see Appendix A) and, agreed the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, to approve the implementation of:-
- 1) The increase in the Basic Allowance to £5,501 (equivalent to a 4.25% increase) retrospectively with effect from 1 April 2022; and
 - 2) The increase to all the Special Responsibility Allowances of 4.25%, retrospectively with effect from 1 April 2022.
- B)** Authorise the Head of HR, Transformation and Corporate Services to implement and advertise the new scheme and make any consequential amendments required to the Scheme of Members' Allowances in Part 6 of

the Constitution.

12. **Calendar of Meetings 2023/24**

The Elections and Democratic Services Manager presented this report on the Calendar of Meetings for the 2023/24 municipal year. A vote was taken and by affirmation

Council

Agreed to approve the Calendar of Meetings for 2023/24.

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

Council

Noted

- A) In respect of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Housing Committee, the appointment of Councillor Bridget Smith in place of Councillor John Batchelor, Councillor Peter Sandford as substitute;
- B) In respect of the Employment and Staffing Committee, the appointment of Councillor Bridget Smith as a substitute.

14. **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority**

Council considered the reports summarising the work of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority since November 2022.

In response to questioning from Councillor Heather Williams, the Leader explained that following a senior management restructure and with the support of the Chief Executives of all the partnering local authorities, the Combined Authority had improved its governance arrangements.

In response to concerns from Councillor Daniel Lentell and Councillor Heather Williams, the Leader explained that she had supported the Combined Authority's raising of a £12 precept for a Band D property to ensure that the replacement bus services, set up following Stagecoach's decision to cease certain routes, continued to run, as this was in the best interests of the District's residents. Councillors Bill Handley, Dr Tumi Hawkins and Brian Milnes expressed their support for this decision. However, Councillor Sue Ellington lamented the lack of a reliable bus service to allow residents of Swavesey to travel to and from the village of Over.

Council **Noted** the report.

15. **Greater Cambridge Partnership**

Council considered the report on the Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint

Assembly meeting on 23 November 2022. Councillor Tom Bygott expressed concern regarding the safety the proposed cycleways. Councillor Paul Bearpark explained that he raised this matter at the Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint Assembly meeting and was assured that cycle routes would be separate from roads wherever possible.

It was agreed that Councillor Graham Cone should be provided with an update on the progress being made on the Fulbourn to Cambridge greenway.

Council **noted** the report.

16. **Update on the Ox Cam Regional Partnership**

The Leader presented this report, which recommended that Cabinet approve her appointment as the Council's representative on the Oxford to Cambridge Pan-Regional Partnership.

Councillor Heather Williams expressed her concern over the lack of long term vision for the whole project and a lack of scrutiny of the Partnership. The Leader agreed that there had been a lack of transparency over the project, but the Government had not allowed the meetings to be held in public and had blocked the setting up of a website. However, a website had now gone live and the agendas and minutes of the meeting would be in the public domain.

In response to concerns from Councillor Daniel Lentell, the Leader explained that the Partnership was not about devolution, but would hopefully bring much needed Government funding to the region. Councillor Martin Cahn suggested that the lack of devolution to England meant that its regions had to participate in partnerships to get national funding.

The Leader proposed and Councillor Brian Milnes seconded the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and were cast as follows:

In favour (26):

Councillors Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam, Ariel Cahn, Dr Martin Cahn, Libby Earle, Peter Fane, Corinne Garvie, Jose Hales, Bill Handley, Sally Ann Hart, Sunita Hansraj, Geoff Harvey, Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, James Hobro, Helene Leeming, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes, Dr Lisa Redrup, Judith Rippeth, Bridget Smith, Richard Stobart, Aidan Van de Weyer, Natalie Warren-Green and John Williams

Against (9):

Councillors Dr Shrobona Bhattacharya, Tom Bygott, Graham Cone, Sue Ellington, Mark Howell, Daniel Lentell, Bunty Waters, Dr Richard Williams and Heather Williams.

Abstain (0)

Council

Endorsed South Cambridgeshire District Council Cabinet's intention to confirm its membership of the Oxford to Cambridge Partnership as it becomes formally recognised and funded by Government as a Pan-Regional Partnership (PRP) and the appointment of the Leader as the Council's representative on the PRP.

17. Questions From Councillors

17 (a) From Councillor Daniel Lentell

Will she explain what is liberal or democratic about just one person deciding that SCDC should participate in OxCam (or express total support for East/West rail) without a debate at Full Council in public session or even a discussion in private among the Liberal Democrat party group

The Leader stated that Councillor Daniel Lentell's question had been addressed earlier in the meeting as part of the discussion of the report on the Ox Cam Pan Regional Partnership, which will now go to Cabinet for formal approval. She stated that this issue had never been about one person deciding things.

As his supplementary question, Councillor Daniel Lentell asked if the Leader believed that debate should have been held earlier, before the decision had been taken to participate in the Partnership. The Leader stated that no prior decision had been taken. She was currently on the Shadow Board and the Chief Executive explained that Council had just recommended that Cabinet approve the Leader's appointment to the Board.

17 (b) From Councillor Carla Hofman

To the Lead Cabinet Member for communities
Can the lead member provide an update on the support the council has provided to local people on the cost of living crisis following the approval by cabinet of a package of measures late last year?

The Chair announced that because Councillor Carla Hoffman was no longer in the chamber she would receive a written response to her question.

17 (c) From Councillor Sally Ann Hart

Can Councillor John Batchelor explain why residents in South Cambridgeshire should feel positive about the future of council housing in our district?

Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, explained that the Council's aim was to ensure that its homes were places that residents could feel safe and secure and where communities could thrive and grow. Our housing management service was responsive and locally based, offering specialised tenancy support for our vulnerable residents and officers ensure that tenants have a voice and can help to influence decisions.

Councillor John Batchelor explained that the Council had recently received Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, which demonstrated the authority's commitment to safeguarding.

Councillor John Batchelor stated that the Council had ambitious targets to tackle the climate emergency through the Asset Management Strategy. Officers continue to work hard to prevent residents from becoming homeless.

Councillor Sally Ann Hart stated that her supplementary question had been answered.

17 (d) From Councillor Natalie Warren-Green

As we approach the end of the first year of the Homes for Ukraine programme, can the lead member provide an update on the scale of support South Cambridgeshire Communities have offered and what is the council's main focus at the moment to ensure hosts and guests get the support they need?

Response from Councillor Bill Handley, Lead Cabinet Member for Communities, stated that the Council had the highest number of visas granted for any district area in the country with just under 800 guests arrive and over 500 still in the area. This had created a huge amount of work for officers who had to carry out numerous checks. The Council's main focus now was to assist our guests in considering their next steps toward independent living and an information pack had been compiled to let them know what their options were. Councillor Handley thanked the officers for their work and was confident that they would continue to rise to future challenges. There was no supplementary question.

17 (e) From Councillor Dr Susan van de Ven

Can Councillor McDonald explain how the council is supporting local businesses outside of the booming science and IT sectors to survive and thrive during this difficult economic period?

The Chair announced that as Councillor Susan van de Ven was no longer in the Chamber she would receive a written response to her question.

17 (f) From Councillor Corrine Garvie

How might the newly formed Oxford Cambridge Partnership benefit South Cambridgeshire

The Leader explained that issued had already been discussed earlier in the meeting. She reiterated that the Oxford Cambridge Partnership will allow the Council to work at a regional scale to deliver environmentally sustainable economic growth that benefits communities across the district. Restorative work was being carried out at Ouse Fen.

As her supplementary question, Councillor Corrine Garvie asked: What will you do if the Government rescinds on its promise that the OCP is focused on the

economy and the environment and starts to talk about large scale housing developments again?

The Leader explained that the project was now firmly locally led and if there was any attempt to implement 1m homes she would object and if necessary pull out of the Partnership.

17 (g) From Councillor Paul Bearpark

Can Councillor John Williams explain how the council is responding to the increasingly challenging financial situation that councils are facing in England?

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, stated that this issue had already been discussed in the meeting but he reiterated that:

- The Council was controlling expenditure and would ensure that through ICT the authority would make the best use of its resources.
- The Transformation Reserve was being used to undertake an ambitious transformation program that would improve services and make savings
- Shrewd investments would continue to bring income to the Council.
- Those most in need would receive assistance from the Council to help tackle the cost of living crisis.
- The business support team would continue to ensure that local businesses were supported.

As his supplementary question, Councillor Paul Bearpark asked what was the most significant challenge over the next 3 years. Councillor John Williams stated that mitigating the impact of the Government's Fair Funding Review was likely to be the most significant challenge.

17 (h) From Councillor Graham Cone

Following the recent call from government for councils to ensure homes are free of dangerous mould, what steps has the Leader taken to ensure this call is answered?

Councillor Henry Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Licensing, explained that with regards to its own housing stock the Council would seek to identify any issues with mould whenever visiting a property. In addition, the Council's Stock Condition Survey would report any issues with mould. It was hoped that the Survey would be completed by September this year. Homes at high risk of mould would be fitted with sensors. With regards to private housing, a recent press release had given details on how tenants could contact Environment Health if they had concerns about damp or mould.

Councillor Graham Cone thanked Councillor Henry Batchelor for his reassuring answer.

17 (i) From Councillor Tom Bygott

SCDC recently took part in a meeting, called by LEGG (the Longstanton

Environmental and Groundwater Group) about the disappearance of Longstanton's groundwater. There were 18 attendees, including 7 local elected representatives and 3 from Homes England. It was agreed that there should be regular follow-up meetings, the first of which is due later this week. Longstanton residents are pleased that the loss of their groundwater is now being taken seriously by SCDC. In the four weeks since this meeting, what new initiatives have SCDC taken to address the loss of Longstanton's groundwater?

Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, explained that the administration was taking this issue with ground water very seriously. The Council had not yet received a response from LEGG regarding work that they had discussed with HR Wallingford. A meeting was scheduled for the coming Friday. Officers were continuing to contact L and Q Estates and Homes England for information regarding surface water drains. When information is received it would be acted on.

As his supplementary question Councillor Tom Bygott asked what lessons had been learned for future developments. Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins replied that the cause of the ground water issued had not yet been identified and this needed to be established before lessons could be learned.

17 (j) From Councillor Sue Ellington

The Council is planning to build a solar farm at Waterbeach in order to supply sufficient electricity to power its fleet of electric refuse vehicles. The installation will include batteries to store generated power and a number of charging points for vehicles. Can the leader tell us how many electric refuse lorries will be involved, how much power they will need each day and can we be reassured that this facility will provide sufficient electricity in all weathers?

Councillor Brian Milnes, Deputy Leader, and Lead Cabinet Member for the Environment, explained that the WREN project will create a microgrid of electricity that will power part of our new electric Refuse Collection Vehicle (eRCV) fleet but the mix of power from the solar PV array and that from the grid will fluctuate across the year. However the battery storage system will enable the maximal use of the solar generated power. For example, at full eRCVs rollout, the solar array would generate about 50,000 kWh in December, with about 58,000 kWh (circa 54% of supply) imported from the grid. However, in June of that year, circa 79,000 kWh would be generated by the PV array with only 27,000 kWh (circa 26% of supply) imported from the grid.

As her supplementary question, Councillor Sue Ellington asked would happen if there was a bad winter with virtually no sunlight for three months. Councillor Brian Milnes explained that, as discussed, if necessary power would be imported from the grid.

17 (k) From Councillor Mark Howell

Over Christmas we were informed that the collection of furniture for disposal had

been discontinued because the law would be enforced from January 2023. Subsequently this service was reinstated. Can the leader tell council what arrangements have been made to enable this service to be reinstated?

Councillor Henry Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Licensing explained that due to a change in legislation items containing pollutants had to be collected by a separate van and this had led to a reduction in the collection service. The situation was being assessed and the provision of an additional van would be considered. There was no supplementary question.

18. Notices of Motion

18 (a) Standing in the names of Councillors Bridget Smith and Heather Williams

Council had been in session for four hours and voted by affirmation to continue.

This item was discussed after item 16.

The Leader explained that abuse of councillors, in person, in writing or online, was getting worse and so the threshold for intervention was getting higher. The consequence of this was that good councillors were resigning and there was a risk that councillor membership would be less diverse. Abuse of officers, who did not have a right of reply, was also increasing. She urged Council to set the right example by agreeing the motion and send a clear message that this abuse was unacceptable.

Councillor Heather Williams expressed her support for the motion and agreed with the Leader that the councillors in this authority needed to set the right example. She explained that abuse and threats affected not just councillors, but also their families and people around them.

Councillor Brian Milnes stated that he would support the motion. He considered that the behaviour of councillors in the Chamber had improved but was aware of the unacceptable abuse from the public.

Councillor Mark Howell suggested that councillors needed to support each other. He explained that the majority of the public were fine but a vocal minority could use the internet from anywhere in the world and abuse an elected representative anonymously. Councillor Sally Ann Hart agreed with Councillor Howell that councillors should support each other and show empathy for those who suffer abuse.

Councillor Tom Bygott supported the motion, which was protecting democracy by trying to ensure that normal people were able to stand for election.

Councillor John Williams suggested that abuse had increased due to social media and urged councillors to behave to each other in the way in which we wanted the public to behave to us.

Councillor Bill Handley explained that he had witnessed bad behaviour at parish council meetings and that abuse affected all tiers of local government. He stated that unfortunately friendships had suffered by taking a standpoint on a public issue.

Councillor Sue Ellington supported the motion and hoped that in many cases an appropriate response could diffuse a volatile situation.

Councillor Daniel Lentell explained that he had received abuse when he had become an independent Councillor. He praised members for having the courage to do their jobs in the public arena, despite the threat of abuse.

The Chair applauded the motion and thanked councillors for helping her to facilitate the debate.

The Leader proposed and Councillor Heather Williams seconded the motion. A vote was taken and by affirmation Council

Agreed the following motion:

The intimidation and abuse of councillors, in person or otherwise, undermines democracy; preventing elected members from representing the communities they serve, deterring individuals from standing for election, and undermining public life in democratic processes.

This council notes that increasing levels of toxicity in public and political discourse is having a detrimental impact on local democracy and that prevention, support and responses to abuse and intimidation of local politicians must improve to ensure councillors feel safe and able to continue representing their residents.

This council therefore commits to challenge the normalisation of abuse against councillors and uphold exemplary standards of public and political debate in all it does. The council further agrees to sign up to the LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign. The campaign aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in local communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the response to and support for local politicians facing abuse and intimidation.

In addition, the council resolves to:

- Use the LGA template letter to write to the local Members of Parliament to ask them to support the campaign
- Use the LGA template letter to write to the Government to ask them to work with the LGA to develop and implement a plan to address abuse and intimidation of politicians
- Regularly review the support available to councillors in relation to abuse and intimidation and councillor safety
- Work with the local police to ensure there is a clear and joined-up mechanism for reporting threats and other concerns about the safety of councillors and their families
- Take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of councillors and officers

19. Chair's Engagements

The Chair explained that in addition to the engagements listed she had also attended:

11 December 2022: Christmas Market at Cambourne Village College

2 February 2023: Ground Breaking at Oakington Recreation Ground, Oakington

With these additions Council **noted** the engagements.

The Meeting ended at 6.55 p.m.
