

# Cllrs Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip

MONTHLY REPORT DECEMBER 2021

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## Green waste collection cancelled from mid-December to January

Hot on the heels of the local press reports of staff concerns and low morale at East Cambs Street Scene which we reported last month, we now hear that the decision has been made behind closed doors to cancel the green waste collection service from Monday 13 December to Friday 28 January inclusive.

The Council's wholly-owned waste collection company says it has been short-staffed due to COVID-19 and the national shortage of HGV drivers. It says that 'it is currently recruiting for three HGV drivers, fast-tracking two employees to enable them to obtain their HGV licence and working with existing staff who want to obtain HGV licences in the future'.

In the meantime, residents are told to reduce food waste, and that green waste can be taken to the Household Waste Recycling Centre at Witchford.

We surprised and disappointed to learn of the plan to stop green waste collections. We know this will be an unwanted inconvenience for residents. It will result in many more car journeys for those who have the means to take their garden waste to the nearest recycling centre but this is not an option for all.

As opposition councillors we first learnt of the ECSS HGV driver shortage in a whistleblowing story in the *Ely Standard*. That story also raised worrying claims of low staff morale. The council's administration needs to be much more open and transparent about the issues faced at ECSS and develop a comprehensive plan to address them.

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## Mepal Outdoor Centre to be demolished by Christmas

East Cambridgeshire District Council leadership's Christmas present to local residents is the wrecking ball due to be sent in to the Mepal Outdoor Centre in the week beginning 6 December.

The Council's current leadership is pressing ahead with its plans for an unwanted and unnecessary crematorium on the site, despite the fact that only thirteen per cent of local residents supported the idea. The Council has already admitted that the crematorium proposal is intended to take financial contributions from developers intended to improve facilities for local residents, and turn them into ready cash to subsidise council tax.

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## **Garden Close appeal (APP/V0510/W/21/3275044)**

We have submitted our representation to the Planning Inspectorate urging the Inspector to dismiss the appeal by Abbey over the Council's refusal of its application for the detail of 53 dwellings rear of Garden Close Sutton. We conclude:

"The appellant argues that it is impossible to deliver fifty-three dwellings on the site with a predominance of single storey dwellings while retaining 'a semblance of low density'. There is of course no obligation on the appellant to build precisely fifty-three dwellings, as the outline consent is for 'up to' fifty-three dwellings. The obligation on the appellant is to deliver any proposed development in a manner that accords with the requirements of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan and the made Sutton Neighbourhood Plan. The justification for the single storey requirement is, as has already been stated, to complement the predominant nature of existing building in the surrounding streets, and the low-lying fen edge location of the site.

The Sutton Neighbourhood Plan has been validly made, with the support of over ninety per cent of residents who voted in the referendum on it in May 2019. It is therefore incumbent on the appellant to demonstrate compliance with the Neighbourhood Plan, not to attempt to undermine this key plank of the local community's planning policy framework."

Anyone wanting a copy of our representation is welcome to email [lorna@lornadupre.org.uk](mailto:lorna@lornadupre.org.uk) for one, or write to 119 High Street, Sutton CB6 2NW.

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## **Trading Company repayments to Combined Authority slip**

Only one of the five housing loans from the Combined Authority is not proceeding in line with the revised COVID-19 programme approved by the Board in August 2020. That exception is the East Cambs Trading Company loan on the MOD site at Ely, where the projected repayment profile is slipping behind that anticipated. The Combined Authority says:

"This is for two reasons. There is still a delay in the sale of the 15 affordable housing units in the scheme. We are advised that this is expected to be resolved and the substantial capital payment received from the sale of those units now before end January 2022. We will continue to monitor the progress of that transaction.

The second reason is a slower than projected rate of sale of the market units over the past eight months. The loan is due to be re-paid by no later than 31st March 2023 and we will continue to monitor ECTC's performance closely to meet that deadline. There are currently four market units reserved and going through the acquisition process and three unit sales

have completed in the last month. Receipts from those reservations will help stop the anticipated repayment profile falling even further behind from what was originally projected, but more and accelerated sales rates are required to catch up.

For the avoidance of any doubt ECTC are not defaulting on the loan. A default will only occur if the loan is not re-paid in full by 31st March 2023. We will continue to monitor and report to Housing Committee on the progress of the repayments.”

We have been continuing to press for information about the resolution of this delay.

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## Cycling & Walking strategy

The Council’s Finance & Assets Committee has agreed a Cycling & Walking Strategy, which arises from the consultation carried out at the start of the pandemic in March to May 2020. The Council intends to use the Strategy to try to influence County Council and Combined Authority plans for active travel.

The priority routes identified in the report are:

- Littleport-Chettisham-Ely (cycling and walking)\*
- Ely-Soham (cycling and walking)
- Ely-Cambridge (cycling)
- Fordham-Burwell (cycling and walking)\*
- Burwell-Exning-Newmarket (cycling Burwell-Newmarket, walking Exning)
- Haddenham-Ely (cycling)\*
- Little Downham-Ely (cycling)\*
- Ely-Witchford
- Ely-Stretham
- Isleham-Fordham
- Fordham-Exning (cycling)
- Lode-Waterbeach (cycling)
- Stuntney-Ely (cycling)
- Witcham-Witchford-Sutton-Elean Business Park (cycling)
- Fordham-Soham (cycling)
- Burwell-Swaffham Prior (cycling)\*
- Reach-Burwell (cycling)\*
- Soham-Wicken (cycling)
- Sutton-Earith (cycling)
- Ely-Prickwillow (cycling)
- Ely-Little Thetford (cycling)
- Haddenham-Wilburton (cycling)
- Wilburton-Cottenham (cycling)

The asterisks indicate five projects for which the Council has commissioned Sustrans to produce feasibility studies for cycling routes. Of these, Swaffham Prior-Reach-Burwell is being treated as one scheme, and Haddenham-A142 is being treated separately as part of one of the above routes.

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## **Business Growth Fund**

The District Council is launching a 'Business Growth Fund' to use up remaining monies granted by the Government to support businesses during COVID-19. The Council has £616,425 left, and will be inviting applications for up to £30,000—not from businesses that are still struggling, but from businesses that want to 'accelerate growth and long term sustainability'.

The grant scheme and criteria will be advertised on the Council's website and the deadline for applications will be 5:00PM on Wednesday 12 January 2022.

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## **Meet your councillors**

We will be holding our virtual surgery via Zoom from 6:30 to 7:30PM on

- Tuesday 7 December 2021
- Tuesday 11 January 2022

Please contact Mark at [mark@markinskip.org.uk](mailto:mark@markinskip.org.uk) to book your timeslot.

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And finally, season's greetings from both of us, with best wishes for a peaceful Christmas and a happy 2022.



**Cllr Lorna Dupré**

**Cllr Mark Inskip**

District Councillors for the Sutton ward