

# CLrs Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip

## MONTHLY REPORT JULY 2022

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### Bin collections

Most of Mark's alternative proposals to resolve the bin collection chaos have at last been adopted by the Council. An update from the Chief Executive says:

1. The ongoing response to missed bins and bags together with assisted lifts continues and with the assistance of Countryside Recycling last week, are making progress in addressing immediate service responses. The service still remains vulnerable to short term absence of key operational staff.

Work is now beginning to identify a pool of external capacity for now and in the future. More fundamentally, the team is assessing the requirement for permanent in house additional resources in light of increased demand for the service.

2. External management consultancy is now in place, specifically to review the reconfiguration and stabilise back office systems, putting into place appropriate SLA's with external contractors to provide resilience and make recommendations on future in house resourcing. In addition, the Chief Executive is being supported on long term changes to terms and conditions of staff and working arrangements.
3. We have made considerable progress on engaging with staff and their trade union representatives. The terms of reference for a Joint Consultative Committee have been presented to the union and its inaugural meeting will take place shortly.

Both the employer and employees side have agreed short term and temporary changes to the terms and conditions for ECSS staff including an additional 6 per cent on basic salary and continuation of double time for overtime payments. These payments will be backdated to 1 April 2022.

Work will now begin on a fundamental review of the terms and conditions of staff and working arrangements, together with the appropriate consultation. It is expected that this will be concluded by autumn this year.

Waste service disruption information is available online at <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/east-cambs-street-scene/waste-service-disruptions>

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## Accessible toilets

Lorna's proposal on accessible toilets in East Cambridgeshire was referred from the Full Council meeting to the Finances & Assets Committee. Here, as expected, the Council's leadership hacked it back to almost nothing.

However, in one small win, Lorna managed to get the Council to persuade the management of The Hive leisure centre on the A10 to scrap the £3 charge to use the showers for people who need to use the 'Changing Places' fully accessible toilet there—the only one in East Cambridgeshire.

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## Mepal crematorium application

The Council leadership's crematorium plan continues to be held up. This time it is because the applicants need to conduct a review of some of the ecology reports as these have expired and an assessment of the ecology and biodiversity on the site needs to be updated. Planning officers are requesting a further extension of time to allow the applicants additional time to conduct these surveys and provide updates.

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## Garden Close Sutton

The agreed extension of time to 30 June for determination of this application has come and gone, and the Council is requesting a further extension before making a recommendation to the Planning Committee.

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## Growth & Infrastructure Fund

The Council's new Growth & Infrastructure Fund opens for bids on Monday 11 July. Proposed projects will be considered with regard to the following criteria:

- Evidence that the project is necessary to support local growth
- The benefits provided by the project
- Evidence of local resident and stakeholder involvement in and support for the project
- Alignment with the Council's infrastructure priorities
- The level of match funding that the project has secured
- Commitment to Net Zero Carbon and a green approach, demonstrating the highest possible quality standards in terms of design, materials, workmanship and environment in its delivery in order to achieve sustainability.

The ability of the applicant to deliver the expected benefits on time and within budget will also be considered.

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## East Cambs Trading Company business plan

The Council's Finance & Assets Committee last month (June) received the business plan of East Cambs Trading Company (ECTC). Lorna had asked the Deputy Leader of the Council the following question at Full Council meeting on 19 May:

At the Council Meeting on 21 April Cllr J Schumann seconded the motion to lend £7.5M to ECTC. He spoke in support of the motion assuring Councillors that the Council's S151 Officer had "scrutinised the Company's Business Plan". On 6 May the shareholders' meeting scheduled for 12 May was postponed. My group has been advised that the reason for this postponement was that the Business Plan for 2022/23 was not due to be received by the Board of ECTC until June. As the Business Plan for 2022/23 has not yet been received by ECTC's Board, why did Cllr J Schumann assure this Council that the S151 Officer had scrutinised it?

A written response from Cllr Schumann has now been added to the minutes of the meeting.

Clearly the terminology used could have caused confusion. What was meant was the financial information on which the Section 151 Officer relied on when making his assessment, and all that information was provided to all Members in the exempt appendix. This included 'plans' in which the 'business' had based its financial projections on. The S151 officer had suggested in his introduction that he was happy that he had scrutinized and considered these plans in his recommendation. My comment was not in reference to the Business Plan document but rather the above explanation. I apologise if the terminology used has caused confusion but believe the Council's decision was made in the correct context and with the necessary information.

It is not clear that this explanation totally clarifies the issue.

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## More social rented housing needed

A report prepared in October 2021 for local planning authorities in Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk says that from 2020 to 2040, 215 more East Cambridgeshire households each year will need affordable housing to rent. Of these homes, 75 per cent should be social rent and 25 per cent affordable rent. This compares to a need for 39 additional properties for affordable home ownership each year.

## ... while house price increases double national trend

Over the last ten years, East Cambridgeshire has seen an increase in median house prices of 55.4 per cent compared to 27.6 per cent nationally, and 42.5 per cent regionally. Median rental prices in the private rented sector across East

Cambridgeshire were £795 per calendar month at the time of the report. This was higher than the national equivalent of £695 and the same as the regional equivalent.

The median house price in East Cambridgeshire was £290,998. This was 27 per cent above the national average and 3 per cent above the regional average.

The report noted that there was a current (282) and projected (697) need for about 979 wheelchair user dwellings to 2040 across East Cambridgeshire.

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## **Council underspends**

The Council underspent its £14.3M budget by £2.4M in 2021/22. A large proportion of the underspend was due to receipt of COVID-related government grants,

The Council spent only around ten per cent of its capital budget—just £480,750 which is an underspend of £4,279,694. Some of the key components of this underspend are

- Waste vehicles—delayed while we await Government’s Waste Strategy.
  - Depot—refurbishment delayed to reassess proposals.
  - Disability Facilities Grant— reduced spending due to COVID restrictions.
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## **Littleport bid**

The Council’s Finance & Assets Committee has agreed to apply to the Government’s Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities for funding for a cycle route linking Littleport Station with the town and the A10 Wisbech Road roundabout; and for refurbishment and extension of the business centre at e-Space North. Lorna has asked what would happen to the cycle route once it reached the roundabout on the A10 at Wisbech Road, as this could have the potential to be another A10/A142 BP roundabout disaster in the making.

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## **Ely Zipper and other buses**

The District Council and Grovemere have paid out £10.400 to keep the Ely Zipper on the road until the service is retendered in October, following notice from operator Dews that it would have to give up the contract early due to rising fuel costs.

The Council is now trying to claim the money back from the Combined Authority. However, the Government is due to end COVID financial support for all bus operators imminently, leaving many bus routes locally and nationally at risk

because passenger numbers have still not recovered since the beginning of COVID. The Combined Authority will need to consider all the likely demands in an open and transparent manner.

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### **Meet your councillors**

We will be holding our virtual surgery via Zoom from 6:30 to 7:30PM on Tuesday 12 July. Please contact Mark at [mark@markinskip.org.uk](mailto:mark@markinskip.org.uk) to book your timeslot.

We are considering options for face to face surgeries.

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**Cllr Lorna Dupré**

**Cllr Mark Inskip**

District Councillors for the Sutton ward