

# CLrs Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip

MONTHLY REPORT OCTOBER 2022

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## Bin collections

Over six months since the reconfiguration of waste collection rounds, and the waste and street cleaning service continues to show—in the words of the Chief Executive—‘failure to meet the usual standards [residents] should expect’.

The Council has now received a report from external consultants, who have made a number of recommendations. These include reforming some of the current working practices in the service, additional HGV resources, and equalising hours across the working week. The consultants have also suggested that external contractual support may be available to support the street cleaning part of the service, to free up permanent staff to focus on waste collections.

Meanwhile the Council is working with staff and trade unions towards reviewing terms and conditions and working arrangements. East Cambs Street Scene now has a formal Joint Consultative Committee for the first time, and negotiations are under way.

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## Planning application updates

### Mepal crematorium 21/01216/F3M

The district council's Planning Committee is set to determine this application on Wednesday 12 October.

### Garden Close Sutton 22/00057/RMM

Lorna has asked for an update on this application. It is not on the agenda for Wednesday 12 October, and the next available Planning Committee dates are 30 November and 7 December.

### Elean Business Park 22/00580/RMM

The applicant has agreed an extension of time to 11 November for determination of this application. Lorna has been in contact with the case officer to request that he consider ways in which the application can help address the longstanding issue of anti-social driving on the business park.

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## Budget

The Council ended the 2021/22 financial year with an underspend of £2,367,039. This has been added to the Council's Surplus Savings Reserve and is available to support spending plans in future years.

This year however the Council is forecasting an overspend of £106,400, and this will come from that Reserve.

The Council's Director of Finance is assuming that the Council's ruling group will once again want to freeze its share of Council Tax in 2023/24. The current estimate is that this would require nearly £2.5M to be drawn from the Surplus Savings Reserve which presently stands at £6.8M.

Earlier this year we as members of the Opposition also proposed a freeze in the District share of the Council tax for the current year. We will wait for further updates on inflation and other variables before coming to a view on our alternative proposals for next year.

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## **Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

Like all Councils, East Cambridgeshire has a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme which sets the minimum council tax to be paid by people in even the most straitened circumstances. This minimum is currently 8.5 per cent of the full amount. Lorna proposed at the last Finance & Assets Committee meeting that in view of the current cost of living crisis, this ought to be reduced to zero for those with the least income. This proposal was defeated, but it is the Full Council that makes this decision so it is likely to be debated again there.

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## **East Cambs Trading Company**

An interesting admission about the state of East Cambs Trading Company finances. One of our councillor colleagues from Ely asked the Trading Company why the Annual Accounts said, 'No liability to UK corporation tax arose for the year ended 31 March 2022 nor the year ended 31 March 2021'. The reason given for this by the company was that 'we have had losses—and cumulative losses'.

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## **Ely High Street grants**

The Council has received £1M for Ely from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority. It is using £100,000 of this as grants to improve the frontages of buildings in and around the high street, or the general appearance of the city centre. The minimum value of grant funding will be £500 and the maximum £20,000. Applications are now open from individuals and organisations in the relevant part of Ely and close on Friday 11 November.

We persuaded the Finance & Assets Committee that it might be a good idea to produce a map to show the eligible area, and to wait until the closing date has passed before awarding money so that applications can be prioritised to best meet the criteria.

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## Meet your councillors

We are reinstating regular face to face surgeries where residents can come and meet us. These will take place on the first Monday of each month from 6:30 to 7:30PM, except where this falls on a bank holiday when the surgery will be a week later at the same time. The venue, as previously, will be the Community Room at Sutton School. Between surgeries, residents can continue to contact us by email, Facebook, or phone.

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**Cllr Lorna Dupré**

**Cllr Mark Inskip**

District Councillors for the Sutton ward