

Cllrs Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip

MONTHLY REPORT JUNE 2023

Annual meeting of the council

The District Council annual meeting took place on Thursday 25 May. Cllr Mark Goldsack is the new Chair of Council, and Cllr Anna Bailey remains leader.

Lorna remains leader of the Liberal Democrat group, and Mark (Inskip) remains the Liberal Democrat lead member for Operational Services. Lorna is no longer a member of the Combined Authority's Overview & Scrutiny Committee, having now been appointed to its Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee. Mark is a member of the Combined Authority's Audit & Governance Committee.

The meeting heard that the Council had been offered, and had taken, the opportunity to repay in one lump sum (around £1,273,000) its commitment to pay £82,000 per year over 25 years towards the upgrade of the A14 from Cambridge to Huntingdon.

A number of councillors asked questions at the meeting.

1. Mark asked what data the council held on the impact of Voter ID in last month's election. 41 voters arrived at the polling station without ID, of whom 27 returned with an acceptable form of ID.
 2. Cllr Dr Caroline Shepherd asked why on one Saturday in May all parking spaces for EV charging in Barton Road car park were occupied by petrol or diesel fuelled vehicles, while the chargers in Newnham Street car park had still not been commissioned—leaving no council car parks where EV drivers visiting Ely could charge their vehicles. Cllr Shepherd was promised a date of the end of June for the new chargers to be operational, but did not respond to the question about EV charging spaces being occupied by fossil fuel vehicles.
 3. Cllr Kathrin Holtzmann asked when the council would start to develop a new local plan which would address the climate emergency. The response from the leader of the council was that the council would propose to begin preliminary consultation shortly on an environment 'chapter' which could form part of a revised local plan. This was a step forward from the ruling party's position before the election, when we challenged them after no funding at all was allocated for work on a local plan in the next four years.
 4. Cllr Mary Wade asked about the death of most of the 5,000 native hornbeam saplings planted for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee maze in Ely Country Park. The maze is now overgrown by metre-high weeds. Cllr Bailey blamed extreme weather, and said a new management regime would need to be considered.
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Operational Services Committee

The agenda of the council's Operational Services Committee meeting on 19 June includes an update of the council's Environment Plan, and a review of work on the council's Youth Action Plan.

Services overseen by the committee overspent by £742,047 last year, compared to its approved budget of £5,818,175. This was mostly due to reduced income from the management fee from the Leisure Centre, increased costs in the Planning service and of dealing with environmental crime, and an increase in the management fee payable to East Cambs Street Scene due to what the council describes as the 'so called' cost of living crisis.

Path from Stimpson Street to The Orchards Sutton

We have been pursuing the completion of the path from Stimpson Street—on the Vistry development at the top of Mepal Road—to the top of The Orchards. The path is a requirement of the planning approval given to Vistry for the development, but it has still not been finished.

Vistry told Mark:

"Initially, we held off completing the full extent of the permanent footpath works as we need to put in a new foul sewer within this location to serve Phase 2. However, this work has been delayed due a number of reasons. Therefore, our engineers are now looking at either realigning the sewer connection so that we can fully construct the permanent footpath, or if not, we put in a safer temporary surface in the interim."

And a member of the District Council's planning enforcement team told Lorna:

"I understand that the installation of the footpath involves works on land owned by ECDC and therefore before I contact the developer, I am awaiting confirmation from the relevant ECDC departments that all necessary agreements are in place for the works to proceed."

Elean straw plant

We joined the biannual Community Liaison meeting on 26 May organised by the team at the Elean power station in Sutton. The power station on the Elean Business Park will start its annual two-week shut-down on Sunday 2 July. In the middle of that day they will be carrying out their usual explosive cleaning. This used to take place at night, but in recent years the firm has responded to community concerns and moved to a daytime schedule for this operation.

The company operating the plant has been rebranded Melton, and is owned by Octopus Energy. They're looking to extend their works car park, and have

recently installed some EV charge points. They will be recruiting more operational staff, and continuing to seek local apprentices from time to time.

Recent noise problems at the power station were traced to a failed silencer on a vibrator on one of their ash conveyors. This led to a regular noise, most noticeable at night. A replacement part has been ordered to fix the problem.

Community energy

East Cambs CAN is looking for Community Clean Energy Champions interested in developing clean energy at a community level in East Cambridgeshire, and has advertised a discussion event with local experts in Ely on Thursday 15 June. More information at eastcambscan.org

Battery storage application in Littleport

SSE Renewables, in conjunction with the landowner, are proposing to construct and operate a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and associated infrastructure on land at Martins Farm in Littleport. A public consultation event is scheduled for Tuesday 27 June at Littleport Leisure Centre, from 3:00PM to 7:30PM. More information at www.southerybess.co.uk

Community advice bus

The service offered by the district council's community advice bus is being drastically scaled back to just Soham and Littleport, and events in Ely. The council says more staff will be available at the council offices in Ely to advise residents. First they closed the CAB, now they're withdrawing the Community Bus service from local villages, making it increasingly difficult for East Cambridgeshire residents to access advice and support.

Meet your councillors

- Monday 10 July, 6:30-7:30PM (rescheduled from Monday 3 July)
- Monday 7 August, 6:30-7:30PM
- Monday 4 September, 6:30-7:30PM

All in the Community Room at Sutton School. Between surgeries, residents can continue to contact us by email, Facebook, or phone.

CLlr Lorna Dupré

CLlr Mark Inskip

District Councillors for the Sutton ward