

Cllrs Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip

MONTHLY REPORT AUGUST 2023

East Cambridgeshire Corporate Plan

The district council's Conservative leadership pushed through its Corporate Plan—its intentions for the next four years—at the Full Council meeting on Thursday 13 July.

We supported some of the stated aims of the Plan.

- Working towards sustainability and enhancement of the natural environment
- Action to tackle environmental crime
- New and improved community infrastructure
- A review of the Planning service (long overdue)
- A new digital service for waste (again long overdue)
- Better street cleaning (after a long period of neglect)

We were pleased to see the inclusion of funding for a new local plan—something we proposed in February and which was opposed by the ruling group.

We will be keen to continue work on developing ideas for active travel routes, though there is no obvious source of funding for these.

Health provision in this country is currently very vulnerable as we know from our recent experience in Sutton and as is also the experience elsewhere in the district—we will be keen to help support the Integrated Care System and regional priorities for health and care.

There were other parts of the Plan we simply could not support.

- The continuing lack of an independent advice service following the council's forced closure of Citizens Advice in Ely
- The reliance on Community Land Trusts to deliver affordable housing when there is no effective regulation of them—some Trusts have done excellent work, while others have deeply divided their communities
- The emphasis on £100K homes which run the risk of leaving people trapped and unable to upsize, and the corresponding lack of emphasis on homes for affordable rent
- The determination to proceed with a crematorium at Mepal which over 85 per cent of local residents do not want
- The Road Safety Police Volunteer Scheme, which no other council in the country has tried—this is not the police's scheme as the council leadership

claims, it has been pressed on the police by the council's ruling group, and is not a police priority; we should move to implement civil parking enforcement like everyone else in the country

And there were some parts of the Plan about which we had questions.

- How are the council's Trading Companies 'commercial' if one is losing money and the other has had to come to the council mid-year for a bail-out?
- Why are our villages excluded from public realm improvements?
- We welcome the administration's commitment to a Net Zero East Cambridgeshire by 2035, but need to see the steps by which it intends to achieve this, particularly in challenging areas such as peat and transport
- We will support the administration if it chooses to engage positively with partners on roads and transport matters, but there is limited evidence so far that this is the approach the administration has decided to adopt

All in all, this was not the Plan we would have put to the Council, and we could therefore not support it.



Cambridge Sustainable Travel Zone

The district council's Conservative leadership also proposed a motion to the Council calling on the Greater Cambridge Partnership, County Council and Combined Authority to 'cease work on the implementation of road charging and, with all partner organisations, MPs, businesses and organisations across Cambridgeshire, to develop alternative proposals that demonstrate public support, focussing on both early delivery of multiple small improvements as well as accelerating work on larger projects that can and will encourage people away from private vehicle use'.

It also proposed to note only the negative responses to the recent consultation.

Unfortunately the motion failed to state what these alternative proposals might be, how 'small improvements' would make a difference to Cambridgeshire's woeful public transport network, or what the 'larger projects' would be that would encourage people out of their cars. It also ruled out one source of funding but failed to identify any others.

Mark seconded an amendment put forward by Cllr Charlotte Cane, which drew attention to the acute shortage of public transport locally. It noted that the proposals put forward by the GCP did not provide a sufficiently comprehensive bus service in East Cambridgeshire to enable residents to use public transport for necessary everyday activities, and called on the GCP to reconsider additional revenue generation options to significantly reduce reliance on road charging.

It therefore urged the GCP to develop plans for a substantial improvement in public transport provision for East Cambridgeshire residents, enabling those without a car to travel into the city as well as providing alternatives for car users to reduce congestion and pollution, so that East Cambridgeshire residents could both travel into Cambridge and continue their journey within Cambridge by public transport

The amendment was defeated, and the original motion was passed with Liberal Democrat councillors abstaining. Cllrs Lorna Dupré and Alison Whelan declared that they were county councillors who would have to vote on any road pricing proposals presented to the County Council, so did not remain for the debate or vote.

The press release issued by the council after the meeting said that ‘Plans to implement congestion charging in Cambridgeshire should be stopped and alternative proposals, like improved bus services given a higher priority, according to East Cambridgeshire District Council.’ Which plays somewhat fast and loose with the truth, as of course the GCP proposals are to raise income from road users *in order to* significantly increase bus services, not as an alternative to this—and whether one agrees with the GCP proposals or not, to suggest that they do not include improved bus services is frankly untruthful.

East Cambridgeshire Local Plan single issue review

East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) is consulting on a small number of proposed modifications to the Single Issue Review of the current (2015) East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

The modifications increase the local housing need from 5,398 to 5,400 dwellings between 2022 and 2031. The latest projections are that 7,000 additional dwellings could come forward in that time.

The consultation will be open until Thursday 31 August, and full details are on the district council website

www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/local-plan-review-examination

Late comments are unlikely to be considered. Once the consultation period ends, all representations (comments) received will be considered by the appointed Inspector examining the Single Issue Review of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

Representations will not be kept confidential and will be made available to the public (including online).

Questions to the Council

A number of councillors asked written questions at the Full Council meeting on Thursday 13 July.

- Cllr Chika Akinwale raised the need for the district council's playgrounds to include facilities for children with disabilities
- Cllr Kathrin Holtzmann asked whether a cross-party working group would be established to help draw up the 'environmental chapter' of the Local Plan to be drawn up by the council this year [answer: no]
- Cllr Mark Inskip asked what details the Leader of the Council was willing to share publicly on discussions members of the council administration had had with ministers and officials at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities about the Department's plans for a quarter of a million additional homes in and around Cambridge, and what representations she had made about the impact on East Cambridgeshire residents
- Cllr Charlotte Cane asked Cllr Alan Sharp on what basis he had recently declared that solar panels stopped generating electricity in hot weather
- Cllr Mary Wade asked how the council could reassure residents that it was taking seriously people's concerns about illegal and dangerous parking

Funding reminders

- East Cambs Community Fund (closes 11 August)
www.eastcambs.gov.uk/finance/east-cambridgeshire-community-fund
- Pride of Place grant (closes 30 September 2024 or until used up)
www.eastcambs.gov.uk/content/pride-place-grant

Meet your councillors

We will not be holding an August surgery. Our next surgeries are

- Monday 4 September, 6:30-7:30PM
- Monday 2 October, 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