



CITY OF ELY COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2020/2021

TO THE

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

29TH MARCH 2021

CONTENTS

COUNCILLOR DETAILS

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT**
- **PERSONNEL, FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE**
- **PLANNING**
- **ASSETS**
- **CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT**
- **TOURISM AND TOWN CENTRE**
- **ELY/RIBE ASSOCIATION**
- **ALLOTMENTS**
- **SUB-COMMITTEES**
 - CIL**
 - Christmas Lights**
- **WORKING GROUPS**
 - Youth**
 - CCTV**
 - Communications & PR**
 - Climate Change**
 - Governance**
 - North of Ely Community Facility**
 - Maltings Seating**
 - Outdoor Sport & Leisure**
 - Strategic Plan**
 - Inclusivity**
 - Covid-19**
- **REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER ORGANISATIONS**
- **FINANCIAL SITUATION 2020/21**



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**Chairman of the Council and Mayor of the City of Ely is Councillor Sue Austen
Deputy Chairman of the Council and Deputy Mayor of the City of Ely is Councillor
Richard Morgan**

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

It has been a great honour to have served as Mayor and Chairman of the City of Ely Council for the past year.

It has been a very different year, with the pandemic curtailing the usual way of working. The Annual Council Meeting and Mayor Making did not happen as usual in May, but was postponed until July, due to the uncertainty of the pandemic.

We have continued with the work of the Council during this past year, ensuring the same efficient and effective service as would normally be given.

Ely had a wonderful Christmas Lights display again. Staff and volunteers safely, erected the lights across the City Centre, adhering to all Government guidelines.

I must praise our Clerks for their hard work and the support that they have given me. As well as the Clerks, who have been working from home, full-time, the Estates Team have also continued to work as normal throughout this year, ensuring parishioners can access the cemetery, play areas and recreation sites safely. Other staff have also continued to work, some have been furloughed and some have worked on reduced hours. I want to thank them all for their continued support of the Council.

We look forward to having much more normal and healthy years in the future. Please continue to keep safe.

CLlr Sue Austen

The Right Worshipful Mayor of the City of Ely and Chairman of the Council

PERSONNEL, FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Committee has six members, with a main responsibility for managing the Council's finances, personnel and setting the annual budget. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, all meetings this year have been held over the Zoom platform, with members of the public able to request access to the meetings.

The City of Ely Council has again been successful in gaining part funding for minor highways improvements and distributed over £12,000 to local charitable organisations from the rents of the shared housing scheme established twenty years ago.

Over the last few years, this Council has taken on more responsibility for the economic well-being of the city and the parish, including the Maltings, Oliver Cromwell House, the tourist information service and the Sessions House. This enables us to preserve some of the historic buildings for the parish residents and also to promote tourism as a main economic activity.

The Council stepped up very quickly at the beginning of this year and organised the voluntary groups that had sprung up to support residents during the lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic.

The Strategic Plan for the Council was drafted, but the impact of the pandemic is such that the contents of the plan may be materially impacted by the pandemic. This is being managed by the Strategic Plan Working Group.

The Committee receives the reports from the Council's Internal Auditor and we are pleased to note the positive reports received during the year.

The Council benefits from the Community Infrastructure Levy from newly built properties in the parish. The CIL Working Group considered a number of projects over the course of the year where they could provide capital funding.

The Council re-affirmed its commitment to all residents of the parish. The Council passed a motion supporting black people in response to the killing of George Floyd and the subsequent protests across the world. The Inclusivity Working Group reports to this Committee and aims to ensure that all activity of the Council promotes behaviours inclusive of all residents. This included making extensive representations to East Cambridgeshire District Council on its Equality and Diversity Policy.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the finances of the Council have been substantial. The council reduced costs wherever possible, and was successful in receiving some support grants, however, the Government failed to provide any direct support for Parish Councils and residents will need to cover the additional costs and lost income as a direct result of this Government failure. The pandemic is likely to have cost the Council about £120k.

The management of historic buildings is an expensive, but necessary task that the Council undertakes. The pandemic has reduced the income that can be earned from events, but has also led to additional costs of protecting staff and the public. The Council has closely monitored both income and expenditure and has attempted to minimise the impact on the finances. To meet this shortfall, an increase of over 20% in the precept would be necessary. The decision was made to use reserves to meet the shortfall so that we could minimise the

impact on residents over the coming year, while we better understand the ongoing finances post-pandemic and also to offer a small amount of help to those suffering financially as a result of the pandemic. The Council tax that we levy will rise, but by just 5p per property per week for a band D property. We do, however, have to face the reality that there will need to be greater increases in future years as we rebuild the depleted reserves.

Cllr Alison Whelan
Chairman of Personnel, Finance & Governance Committee

PLANNING COMMITTEE

The City of Ely Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications received by East Cambridgeshire District Council that relate to the area covered by the Parish of Ely. There are two Planning Committees, each comprising 6 members, but they share one Chairman and they meet every two weeks. Occasionally they hold a combined meeting when bigger developments need considering (such as the development of the hospital site), or when developers wish to present their proposals (such as the proposed development at the Westmills site). All meetings have been held on Zoom this year, and members of the public are always invited to attend.

Applications cover a wide variety of planning matters. On the whole, in accordance with national planning policy, there has been a presumption in favour of planning approval. However, the Committees have recommended that ECDC should refuse planning permission in a number of circumstances related to local issues. Mostly, these centre around applications for development where there appear to be inadequate provision of off-street parking places, less often to danger related to traffic flows, or proposed changes that adversely affect the street scene or amenity of neighbours.

Cllr Ian Lindsay
Chairman Planning Committees

ASSETS COMMITTEE

The Assets Committee has met 5 times during the past 12 months – all meetings were conducted by Zoom.

Sessions House has been closed to the public since March last year due to the pandemic, although staff have continued to deal with enquiries from the public, with no disruption to the service they provide.

The Maltings has suffered during the last year due to the pandemic, with periods of closure due to national lockdown. When it has been permitted, the building has been open and continued to operate as best it could, within the Government guidelines. A café was operated for several weeks, which saw residents being able to enjoy a selection of food and drinks. The staff welcomed numerous residents and visitors to the City and it is hoped this could be operated again, once the lockdown is eased and the Maltings is allowed to reopen on the 17 May 2021.

RBK Restaurant, next to The Maltings, operated as a take-away for both food and drink until 4 January 2021.

Maltings Cottage. It was hoped that this might have progressed further. In consultation with ECDC various remedial works have been carried out. We are waiting for ECDC to report back to us with regards to an insurance claim.

The former Recreation and Cemetery Committee is now a part of the Council's Assets Committee. Cllr Chris Phillips serves as Lead Member and liaises with Sarah Jay, Deputy Clerk and Richard Delahaye, head of the Estates Team on matters relating to these two areas of Council responsibility. Under the umbrella of the Assets Committee the aim of 'Rec and Cem' continues to be to “nurture pride in the City of Ely by promoting and developing the recreation and play areas owned by the Council and developing Ely Cemetery in co-operation with the citizens of Ely, local businesses and other organisations”.

Recreation

During the 2020 Covid-19 related lockdowns the Council's nine play areas were closed in accordance with Government regulations. The post-Christmas lockdown which is still in operation at the time of writing allows for public use of equipment designed for younger children, but our ball courts, gym and skate park remain closed. There is no doubting the popularity of the Council's play areas and their full reopening in the coming months will be welcomed.

During the current year the refurbishment of the Willow Walk playground has been completed and all other areas have been maintained to a high standard by the Estates Team, in order to ensure the safety of the equipment and the cleanliness of the environment. The Assets Committee is aware of the need for an upgrading of the Paradise Centre playground. This was postponed originally because of the proposed development of the former swimming pool site and is again on hold while discussions are being held about the location of a Splash Pad in the City.

Cemetery

Throughout the year the Cemetery along with its chapel, garden areas, roads and pathways has been maintained to a high standard. Work has pressed ahead on the new burial area adjacent to High Barns Road. Drainage issues have been addressed and the grassing over of the site will soon be completed. It is intended that a new hedge will be put in at the boundary with High Barns. During the clearing of the site an unexpected 'bonus' was the uncovering of some of the gravestones previously thought to have been lost during a radical overhaul of monuments some years before the City Council took over maintenance of the Cemetery. These have now been displayed in a quiet area and have already been the subject of some historical research.

During the year the Council has approved other projects that will enhance the Cemetery. A bench has been placed on the mill mound and notice boards detailing some of the more historically significant areas of the site have been ordered and will soon be in place. A major project, the development of a sensory garden, is currently being discussed. This will be an area of rest and reflection for visitors to the Cemetery, catering too for those with sensory disabilities. It will be planted to attract insects and birds and will thus fit in with the Council's policy to make this large open space conservation friendly.

One issue that has emerged during the very wet winter of 2020-21 has been that in some areas of the Cemetery the drainage has been unable to cope with the amount of rain and that the digging of graves has been all but impossible. This will have to be addressed during the current year to see what steps might be taken to prevent this problem reoccurring.

The Friends of Ely Cemetery have not been able to meet as often as they would have liked but it was possible to hold an Open Day to coincide with the Heritage Weekend 2020 and this turned out to be a well-attended event. It is hoped that Open Days will become regular feature of the Friends' calendar. The project to build up an archive of biographical material relating to people buried in the Cemetery has continued.

One major item of equipment that has been bought this year is a Monkey Tower – a trailer scaffolding tower that has already been put to good use by the Team.

Estates Team

The City Council is fortunate to have a dedicated Estates Team which, under the leadership of Richard Delahaye, has worked throughout the year under sometimes difficult circumstances to ensure a that high standard of care and maintenance has been achieved.

Cllr Richard Morgan
Chairman of the Assets Committee

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

The aim of the Climate & Environment Committee is to nurture and develop pride in the City of Ely by facilitating a clean, healthy and attractive local environment in co-operation with the citizens of Ely and a myriad of other agencies and organisations.

The Committee of 5 has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of street furniture including dog waste bins, notice boards, benches, flower containers, signs, 21 lamp posts and lights, bus shelters, grit bins, solar powered lights on Cherry Hill and the riverside, a flagpole on the market place and the City and Prickwillow war memorials. It cares for some trees and green areas within the City, as well as providing and maintaining the City's floral displays. It runs the memorial bench scheme. Following a reorganisation at the start of this Council year it receives reports directly from 3 working groups, covering Climate Change, CCTV and Outside Sports and Leisure; and one of its members takes the lead on matters related to highways. In particular this encompasses a strategy to reduce speeding within the City boundaries, and to improve walking and cycling routes.

Along with others such as Perspective, the Access Group, Speedwatch and Neighbourhood Watch, we monitor litter clearing; street cleaning; removal of graffiti; de-cluttering of streets; maintenance of signs and road markings; provision of cycle ways; changes to street lighting; traffic calming measures; policing; crime reduction, and reduction in anti-social behaviour. Many of these activities are managed on a day-to-day basis by other agencies such as East Cambridgeshire District Council or Cambridgeshire County Council with whom the City Council maintains a close working relationship. At a more strategic level we hope to collaborate in making plans to benefit from monies from the Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Combined Authority's Market Towns Initiative aimed at improving the appearance of the Town Centre and increasing its digital connectivity.

The Committee has met via Zoom 6 times this Council year. Its activities are governed by a rolling action plan, which details short, medium and long-term objectives, and ensures that all its activities are budgeted for. Over the last few years, it has had considerable success in applying for support through the County Council's Local Highways initiative scheme. This, together with monies from the City Council precept and funds from our share of the community infrastructure levy, will eventually enable the provision of a zebra crossing for St John's School, and this year should help develop traffic calming measures along Prickwillow road, and in Prickwillow itself.

We were able to complete the renovation of Prickwillow's war memorial in time for Remembrance Sunday, and have successfully taken on the provision, planting and watering of the town's floral displays. Perhaps more mundanely, but no less importantly, our Estates Team continues to monitor and maintain the condition of our street furniture and buildings on a rolling basis, and also maintains, recharges and rotates our stock of radar speed signs. Members of the Committee normally participate in community forums, and join with other groups and members of the public in organized litter picks. Neither of these activities have been possible since the start of Covid-19 restrictions, though there is an increasingly active group of voluntary litter pickers who have rallied to the cause of keeping our surroundings clean and beautiful for the enjoyment of all.

In all we have had a successful year and I feel we have met our aims, and have contributed to an improvement in our community's wellbeing through a particular difficult time.

Cllr Ian Lindsay - Chairman of Environment Committee

TOURISM AND TOWN CENTRE COMMITTEE

Visit Ely has had an incredibly challenging year due to Covid 19 and the restrictions that this has put on the services we provide. Visit Ely has had to be flexible, carrying out events, walks and tours whilst ensuring that all Public Health and Government restrictions and guidelines were followed.

Approximately 250 days were lost in the last 12 months due to Covid restrictions and closures. However, despite this every effort was made to maximise the number of days that were available. A number of walking tours were planned for the summer months, which involved liaising with other hospitality trades within the City, including Peacocks Tea Rooms, Poets House and Lemon Tree. Together with autumn/winter walking tours including Witches and Witchcrafts, Eel Trail, the Riverside and Monastic tours. All tours were socially distanced, followed Public Health Guidelines and were generally well received by the public.

Sadly, due to Covid restrictions and social distancing measures, Eel Day was cancelled and Apple Day had to be significantly scaled back. Oliver Cromwell's House was open as and when Government guidelines allowed.

Due to the hard work and dedication of the Visit Ely team we were awarded a grant from the Government's Culture Recovery fund to improve visitor experience to Oliver Cromwell's House.

Unfortunately, during the year, the City Ranger Kerry, Carlson-Browne decided to leave her position. In the current circumstances it was felt that resources were best concentrated on the liaison and collaboration between City Centre Traders and the City of Ely Council. As a result, Annabel Reddick has taken on the role of Business Liaison Assistant on a temporary, part-time basis.

As Chair of the Tourism and Town Centre Management Committee I would like to thank Anna Bennett and her team for all their hard work, dedication, and flexibility, in what has been a very difficult year.

Cllr Dian Warman
Chairman of Tourism and Town Centre Committee

ELY RIBE ASSOCIATION

Along with many other organisations the past year has been rather a non-event. Due to lockdowns and tier restrictions our members have not been able to get together for any of our usual events, and we are greatly looking forward to the time when we are able to meet together again and plan for the future. I have been keeping in touch with members and friends both here and in Ribe through regular emails but it is not the same as having face-to-face contact with people. We would like to invite our Danish friends to visit Ely in 2022 but it is difficult to make any such plans in the current situation.

The Ely-Ribe Tapestry, celebrating the 60th anniversary of twinning between our 2 communities in 2006, has been on display in the foyer of the Maltings since then and the Association is delighted that the City of Ely Council has decided that it should remain there. Last November a “pop-up” café was opened at the Maltings using the Tapestry as its central theme. The Association was pleased to be involved in this and we are looking forward to the café re-opening in a few weeks. We hope that this will bring the Tapestry to the attention of many more people in and around Ely, including local schools. It is not only a beautiful piece of artwork but could also be used as a valuable curriculum resource for schools and we hope to be involved in developing this idea in the future.

Once again, I would like to thank the City of Ely Council for their interest and support and hope that we will be able to resume “normal service” soon.

Mr Howard McMillan
(Chair, Ely Ribe Association)

ALLOTMENTS

REPORT ON THE ALLOTMENT YEAR 2020/2021 FROM THE CITY OF ELY ALLOTMENTS AND GARDENS ASSOCIATION

GENERAL COMMENTS:

This year has again been a strange and difficult one, and also not the one I would have liked as my last as chair of the Association, but also a very rewarding one as I think that the allotment community has grown closer together.

Again, during the two lock-down periods working on an allotment provided a good source of exercise and we would like to thank the City Council for appreciating this and keeping the site open.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank not only the Committee for their continued help but all the members of the Association who have tended their plots and maintained the Government rules regarding social distancing.

During one of the hot dry spells in the summer we were contacted by Anglia Television asking if they could come to Ely and carry out some filming, again on New Barns, for a proposed news item on how the weather was affecting allotments.

A copy of the film, prior to editing, is available either via our website or on You Tube. The winter was not very kind to us due to periods of heavy rain, bitter cold, and strong winds. It is hoped that the proposed Government roadmap is maintained and so it will allow the plots to be judged in early July and we will be able to hold our Awards Evening in September. The demand for an allotment continues to be high, with all our sites being full, and an ever-growing waiting list we are eagerly awaiting the proposed new sites to become available.

NATIONAL ALLOTMENT SOCIETY:

Due to government restrictions and other factors, it has meant that no meeting of the NAS Eastern region have taken place.

However, advice from the Society regarding the Covid regulations and particular advice for allotment associations and tenants has been readily available through their website.

Their AGM was carried out on line with access available to all members. It is, of course, hoped that the situation can return to normal later in the year.

BRIDGE FEN: Number of Tenants – 128

Bridge Fen has seen a few changes during the year with the creation of extra plots, to ease the waiting list, the dredging of the drain along one side to ease drainage, the construction of a new fence along the bottom of the site giving a definite boundary to the site.

We have been in negotiations all year with Cambridgeshire Highways with regard to creating a safer pedestrian/cycle access across the A142 and onto the site. These discussions have finally resulted in success and plans have been agreed on a scheme, initial ground work has been carried out and we have been told that the construction of the access will commence April/May.

The winter weather, rain and wind, caused a few problems on site with plots too wet to be worked and damage to sheds and other structures but the situation is improving and tenants are busy preparing for the new season.

Throughout the year the site has continued to be affected by the usual gardening pests of vermin and birds, all of which are being dealt with in various ways.

NEW BARNS: Number of Tenants - 58

This site is fully tenanted and despite increasing the number of plots available we still have a long list of people waiting who have specified this popular City site.

The site reps have been kept busy all year with general maintenance, mowing and strimming, and also with extra work, trimming the boundary hedge between the site and the cemetery, improving site fencing to keep out unwanted (animal) visitors.

The site suffered very badly from flooding due to the heavy rainfall, standing water being seen on nearly every plot. Investigations were undertaken with help and advice from Anglian Water and a local Drainage Board Engineer as to why the situation was so bad and what could be done to alleviate it in the future.

The condition of the access gate in the boundary fence at the top of Clayway has significantly deteriorated so that it is in need of replacement, Sanctuary Housing have agreed to do the

work as the fence is their property. Another problem with the fence recently occurred as damage has been caused by a vehicle reversing into it and a section is leaning into the allotment site, this has been reported to Sanctuary Housing.

UPHERDS LANE – Number of Tenants - 50

This City site is also very popular and although fully tenanted it still attracts a large number of people who are prepared to wait for a plot to become available.

Site improvements have continued throughout the year, a section of a hard-surfaced path was extended, some overhanging vegetation and several small trees have been removed and the site drainage problem has been resolved.

The ongoing problem of the solid wood fence, the responsibility of Cambridge Housing Association, has been eased with the missing sections having been replaced. It is still hoped that CHA will replace the whole fence with one of a more suitable design, as they agreed to at our meeting with them last year.

The site also suffered from the heavy rainfall but it was thought that extra drainage work carried out in the previous year had help to alleviate a more serious problem. A communal shed has been acquired for the site, an area has been cleared and a slab base laid, when weather conditions and Covid restrictions allow it will be assembled.

BACK HILL: Total Number of Tenants - 2

Back Hill, our smallest site has only two plots, both of which are well maintained.

CANTERBURY AVENUE: Total Number of Tenants - 12

Canterbury Avenue site is also proving very popular, its plots are small and ideal for first time allotment holders. It has been redesigned to create two extra plots which were soon tenanted and like all our other sites it is full.

A working party was arranged to tidy up the entrance pathway following a complaint from one of the residents of an adjacent property.

TRADING STORES:

The Stores, have continued and opened from 10.00 – 12.00 on Saturday 11th April, using a click and collect system, and was modified during the year so that we were able to accept not only payment by bank transfer but also by cheque and cash in sealed envelopes.

Schemes with Kings Seeds and seed potatoes through our usual supplier were run and both proved popular and very successful with our members.

I would like to take this opportunity to give a big thank you to Tony Edmondson for his outstanding contribution in the Stores operation, and to all the others who given up their Saturday mornings to keep it running smoothly.

ST. MARY'S GARDEN:

The garden has continued to be maintained throughout the year by a group of members, on a rota system, and we would like to thank them for their diligent work.

The grower who has supplied the plants for several years has retired and whilst we have been able to acquire plants for the coming summer planting we are searching for a new source for future years.

WEBSITE AND EMAIL:

This year was an exceptional one for inquiries from potential tenants and numbers on the waiting list more than doubled. In January 2020 pre-pandemic there were 37 names on the list. This has increased to 88 at March 2021 despite 52 new tenants acquiring allotment plots. This record number of lettings was mostly achieved by the subdivision of plots, particularly at Bridge Fen. Overall, 135 inquiries about acquiring a plot were received through the website in 14 months.

The Association's investment of financial and volunteer resources in IT services supported the ongoing activities through 2020. Online ordering systems were created for the Stores (following NAS guidelines) covering stock items and the seed potato scheme. Annual plot rental renewals and other bulk communications to members were successfully conducted by email with coverage of our (nearly) 300 members now at 95%.

Committee meetings have continued to be held monthly via an online conferencing platform.

Mr Graham Bond
Outgoing Chairman – City of Ely Allotments and Garden Association

SUB-COMMITTEES

CIL SUB-COMMITTEE

CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funding was introduced in 2008 to be used for infrastructure to benefit the Community. It has to be new projects and not a replacement and has to fit in with the Business Plan.

To date funding has been given to support the No. 9 bus service, Ely Cemetery expansion, three defibrillators, refurbishment of the Court Room within Sessions House and funding is identified if the Council's Local Highway Improvement scheme bids are not successful. It has also been agreed to support funding for a sensory garden, seating and information notice boards within Ely Cemetery.

Cllr Sue Austen
Chairman of CIL Working Group

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SUB-COMMITTEE

The Christmas Lights are part of the Assets Committee, but a close relationship is maintained with community volunteers. It was agreed that as the Christmas Lights and Switch-on Group were split across two Committees, that a new Christmas Lights Sub-Committee would be formed. They have not met this year yet.

The Christmas Lights Group is led by Mike Chinery-Colyer, who coordinates the team throughout the year. Despite the difficulties that Covid-19 brought, the team successfully erected a tremendous display of lights, ably assisted by the Council's Estates Team and also members of the USAF, who also volunteered their time. The team work throughout the year to prepare the lights, ready to begin putting them up in October. This usually takes around 5 weekends and the team often encounter difficult weather conditions. The tree was supplied by Elveden Trees and was a welcome addition to the Market Place in bringing some Christmas cheer.

The Switch-On Group is led by Ian Newstead, who organises and coordinates the team for the evening's entertainment. They plan throughout the year to bring in sponsorship, acts and entertainment, charity and trade stalls for a non-stop fun packed evening's entertainment. Unfortunately, as with many events in 2020 due to Covid-19, the event was cancelled. However, the evening was still recognised by a broadcast of the lights being switched on and an address to the public on Social Media from the Mayor of Ely, Cllr Sue Austen.

The City of Ely Council is grateful to all staff, volunteers, local businesses and organisations that support the lights, as without their support and dedication, the lights in Ely would not be possible.

Moving forward to 2021 the groups will meet as a Sub-Committee of the Assets and Tourism and Town Centre Committees, with Councillors representing these committees, along with the Deputy Clerk, The Tourism and Town Centre Manager and co-opted volunteers.

The Council, staff, Christmas Lights Team and the Switch-On group look forward to bringing the Christmas lights and Switch-On event to the Parishioners and visitors to the City once again in 2021.

Sarah Jay
Deputy Clerk

WORKING GROUPS

YOUTH FORUM WORKING GROUP

The Youth Forum Working Group is made up of 6 councillors. It reports directly to the Personnel Finance and Governance Committee.

It has had limited activity this year due to the postponement of youth activities and closures of schools throughout the lockdowns.

Cllrs Christine and Alison Whelan were asked to engage with a local scout group last year explaining how the City Council operates and what they can do engage with the Council. This was done in a virtual meeting.

The scout group were a lovely group who engaged well with the discussion and the talk and asked very good questions. They were encouraged to actively think of ideas that young people would like to see within the City.

I am hoping that more of these will be able to take place going forward and maybe when the time is right, face to face meetings with these youth groups.

Christine Whelan
Chairman of Youth Forum Working Group

CCTV WORKING GROUP

Whilst the recording function of the cameras has still been undertaken, with the Coronavirus pandemic, our volunteers have not been able to undertake their normal duties and the service has been very reduced.

However, in the meantime, and working on the Safer Streets agenda, the Working Group has been looking at a review of the current service, looking at the efficiency of the current systems and considering how it could be expanded. The group has been looking at 2 aspects during the review:

- a) The replacement of all the older cameras with new digital cameras and this is being costed. Funds are being considered for this aspect of the review.
- b) In addition to the above, that the CCTV systems be extended to cover a wider area, eg reaching the station, down to the riverside etc. New sites have been identified by the police and our other partners.

We have commissioned our consultant to look at the implications of the above: specifications and costings and a report is currently being compiled.

We are looking at both of the above and a process is in hand to determine how the review(s) could be funded, working with partners.

Safer streets is a priority for the East Cambridgeshire's Community Safety Partnership.

We are anticipating that as soon as we are able to provide a Covid secure site and volunteers are willing to return, the full service will be resumed.

Cllr Elisabeth Every – Chair of CCTV Working Group

COMMUNICATIONS AND PR WORKING GROUP

The Communication and PR Working Group is a consultative group consisting of 5 councillors that report to the Personnel, Finance and Governance Committee.

The aim of the Working Group is to consider the effectiveness of current, internal and external communications and Public Relations.

At the start of last year, the C&PR Working Group worked together to find effective ways to improve our communications with the public. We came up with various ideas, strategies and costings. These were then forwarded to be included into the City Council's Strategic Plan.

We are still working hard to keep everyone informed and a plan for regular newsletter's is underway. We will continue to keep everyone updated on our social network platforms and the Ely publication. Parishioners also visit the City of Ely Council website, www.cityofelycouncil.org.uk, as this contains all of the Council's relevant information and is being constantly updated.

Cllr Arnie Arnold - Chairman of Communication & PR Working Group

CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

The Climate Change Working Group was formed to reflect the growing concerns about the climate change in the parish. This followed a climate change emergency declared by the Council.

The Working Group agreed to work collaboratively with other organisations covering the City who were advancing environmental causes.

A Mayor's Forum was planned which would be focussed on climate change and would be the rallying point for the parish residents to become engaged and inform the Council direction on climate change.

The main actions of this Working Group are working with external organisations and the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that these plans were cancelled.

The Working Group is also considering other ways that the Council can reduce its environmental impact, which will be progressed in the coming months.

Cllr Alison Whelan
Chairman of Climate Change Working Group

GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUP

The Governance Working Group is made up of councillors, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk and the Group reports directly to the Personnel Finance and Governance Committee.

It was set up to look at how the committee structure could operate more efficiently. The Working Group has no budget, so therefore can only make recommendations to the PF& G Committee.

We have met a few times this year as required by the PF&G and have made recommendations for various changes and changes to standing orders. The committee structure was reviewed, and the committees were changed to reflect the needs of the Council. Moving forward into next year the committee will review the council structure and any changes that have been requested in the coming year.

Cllr Christine Whelan
Chairman of Governance working Group

NORTH OF ELY COMMUNITY FACILITY WORKING GROUP

I served as Chair of this Working Group, which was set up to oversee the construction and tender of a new community centre on the Orchards Green development. Other members of the working group are Cllrs Austen, Bellow, Every and Rouse. We held one meeting, on 5th January 2021, at which we agreed our terms of reference and initial actions to take. Cllr Every is currently arranging a joint meeting between this Working Group and the Covid-19 Working Group to cover areas that fall within the purview of both Groups.

Cllr Edward Carlsson Browne
Chairman of North of Ely Community Centre Working Group

MALTINGS SEATING WORKING GROUP

The Maltings is one of the largest venues in the area. It is used extensively for commercial and community activities, having a large auditorium with tiered seats, stage, green room and other smaller conference rooms.

The tiered seats now require replacement, not only from the maintenance point of view but also the comfort! The Working Group was set up to look at the possibilities of external funding for these replacement seats. However, internal funding is also being considered and this is currently being explored. Exploring tenders for the replacement seats is underway.

It is probably fair to say that there are other aspects of the Maltings which also require upgrading, eg the stage, green room etc. in order to make this a really good 'fit for purpose' venue for cultural and arts events. It is possible that this Working Group may be asked to pick up this in the future.

Cllr Elisabeth Every
Chairman of Maltings Seating Working Group

OUTDOOR SPORT & LEISURE WORKING GROUP

This Working Group has been formed to consider the request for a splash pad in Ely and since the Council meeting of 22 February to liaise with the local campaign group RASE to provide a skate park locally. Discussions and meetings are ongoing with a view to bringing proposals to the Council in the next business year.

Cllr Mike Rouse - Chairman of Outdoor Sport & Leisure Working Group

STRATEGIC PLAN WORKING GROUP

The Working Group consists of the Chairs of the Council Committees together with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and the Clerk.

The Working Group was set up to consider the strategic review carried out by LGRC on behalf of the Council.

The Working Group presented a draft Strategic Plan to the Personnel Finance and Governance Committee and this was circulated to all Councillors.

The review included a draft action plan and the Chairs of each Committee are now prioritising these actions and carrying out costing analysis to build the future Strategic Plan. This will then enable the future budgets to be based on these plans and provide a greater level of certainty and enable well managed development of the Council. This is particularly important as the City grows and new services fall to this Council. With the additional responsibilities for the economic well-being of the City and the parish, including the Maltins, Oliver Cromwell House, the tourist information service and the Sessions House.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a serious impact on both the work of the Council and also on the finances of the Council. As such, the plan may already require significant overhaul to reflect the impacts of the Pandemic.

Cllr Alison Whelan
Chairman of Strategic Working Group

INCLUSIVITY WORKING GROUP

The Council's *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Statement* is published in full on its website and sets out not only the Council's vision to include all people of the Parish in its activities and policies, but also how that might be achieved.

The Inclusivity Working Group seeks to monitor, promote and develop the Council's policy and was set up with the intention of reaching out to the wider community. During the Covid-19 pandemic this has not proved to be easy but plans are in hand to hold discussions with a variety of community groups with a view to encouraging interaction and the exploring of common ground.

The Working Group has been able to meet on-line and on 28th October was able to formulate a response to the District Council's consultation on its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. This was submitted to ECDC and several of the points made by the City Council were taken on board.

Cllr Chris Phillips
Chairman of Inclusivity Working Group

COVID-19 WORKING GROUP

In early 2020, local Facebook and WhatsApp groups sprang up quickly to connect neighbours, sometimes covering just a few houses in a street. Members of the Working Group have continued to be in contact with the co-ordinator of the Ely Covid-19 Mutual Aid Group who, along with her volunteers, has done so much to support local residents.

The City Council has been represented on the East Cambridgeshire Parish and Community Forum which began in May 2020 and continues to provide a platform for parish councils and mutual aid groups to share concerns, ideas and challenges of supporting their communities to cope with an unprecedented situation.

During the latest third lockdown, Cllrs Every, Austin and Bellow volunteered to support the Ely Covid Mutual Aid group by listing their telephone numbers as initial contact for residents who are unable to complete the form on the group's Face Book page. Demand has been low as most residents who requested support in the early stages of the pandemic, have been able to continue receiving help. Supermarkets have increased the numbers of delivery or click and collect slots, enabling easier access to food shopping.

The support needs are changing from practical, physical help to activities to support our wellbeing. Issues are emerging around anxiety about leaving the house after a year of being urged to stay at home, carer burn-out and we are yet to see how many social groups re-start activities again.

As the promise of freedom from restrictions beckons, and more residents receive their vaccinations, we look forward to being able to meet up in person once again.

Cllr Sarah Bellow
Chairman of Covid-19 Working Group

REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

PRICKWILLOW VILLAGE COUNCIL

This council has met about 4 times this year including an Annual Meeting in January – the majority of meetings were conducted by Zoom.

Speeding is still a problem, particularly in Putney Hill Road, Main Street and Mile End Road. The resignation of the Speedwatch Team has aggravated the situation. Grateful thanks to Brian & Christine Gerbaldi and their team of volunteers for all their past work.

The banks and the moorings of the River Lark closest to Prickwillow Road bridge have been repaired to the satisfaction of residents. A sunken boat has been removed.

Sporadic petty vandalism continues including turning speed signs around. During the next phase of road repairs, Les Middleton, Acting District Highways Manager, will fix anti-rotational clips to stop this happening.

The Acting District Highways Manager was also able to patch and fill potholes near the railway bridge on Branch Bank.

The annual ploughing festival with heavy horses was cancelled due to the pandemic.

Since Christmas, the ex-phone box on Main Street has been used as an emergency swap shop for those unable to get out during the lockdown.

The former Baptist Chapel is being marketed by Rapleys. Offers over £100,000 are invited.

At a special Remembrance Day service held at 3.00pm on Sunday 8 November the Mayor's Chaplain, the Revd Canon Paul Andrews, blessed and re-dedicated the war memorial before a small crowd of residents. The Mayor, the Mayor's Consort, the Deputy Mayor & Deputy Mayoress, Cllrs Sarah Bellow and Michael Rouse were in attendance.

Hare coursing continues to blight the lives of residents of Padnal Bank as all-terrain vehicles speed along Padnal Bank to the land between Hawkes Farm and Upper Engine House, Branch Bank, Queen Adelaide.

Cllr Richard Morgan
City of Ely Council Representative

PARADISE LEISURE CENTRE

I became City of Ely Council's representative on the Paradise Centre Management Committee at the 2020 Annual Meeting. Since then, the Management Committee has held one in-person meeting, on 22nd September 2020. Other business has been transacted via email.

At the time of the meeting the Paradise was enjoying having been able to re-open to some extent, but for the most of the period since lockdown restrictions have forced it to remain closed. We can only hope that it will be possible for this to end soon and for normal service to resume.

I have been helping to liaise between the Paradise Centre and the Splashpad campaign, who are interested about potentially occupying a site in the area. Initial discussions have identified the hard court to the east of the centre as the most likely site to be suitable for this. Cllr Every is also working with the skatepark campaign on a similar project.

Cllr Edward Carlsson Browne
City of Ely Council Representative

ELY TRINITY DOLE

The Ely Trinity Dole is a small charity with deep roots in the parish of Ely's history. Two councillors, Rebecca Denness and Chris Phillips, currently serve as the Council's representatives on the Board of Trustees. The charity's income is derived from investments and from rents and these funds enable it to make annual grants to local schools, mostly to support extra-curricular activities, and to set aside a sum to be used should any case of especial personal need be brought to the Trustees' attention.

This year, during the Covid crisis, the Trustees were able to make an additional grant to buy laptops for several students studying from home.

Cllr Chris Phillips
City of Ely Council Representative

STUNTNEY VILLAGE COUNCIL

Stuntney falls in the recently created Cathedral Ward of the Ely Parish, so as the ward councillor I have been attending their bi-monthly meetings since September 2019. With the Ely southern by-pass now in use, and about to be renamed Seeking's Way in memory of a local war hero of World War 2, the focus has shifted towards the provision of a safe junction at the western end of the village bypass, and a dual use path into Ely. As with other councils, all their meeting this year have been held on Zoom, so business continues as normally as possible.

Cllr Ian Lindsay
City of Ely Council representative

PADNAL & WATERDEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

The Padnal & Waterden IDB held two meetings via Zoom in the past 12 months, in June 2020 and February 2021. I was present at the first and sent apologies for the second. The pandemic notwithstanding, business on the IDB continues very much as normal.

Cllr Edward Carlsson Browne
City of Ely Council Representative

CAWDLE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

I have attended all meetings of Cawdle Fen IDB via Zoom. Cawdle Fen is the smallest IDB in the Ely Group and continues to be well managed, prudent and financially sound.

Cllr Mike Rouse
City of Ely Council Representative

ELY MUSEUM

Ely Museum has now nearly completed its redevelopment and all building works are now complete. I have attended meetings over the past year. Trustee meetings have continued online via Zoom which served the purpose.

The Museum closed its doors in Autumn 2019, builders moved in and soon the eventual shape of the outside began to become evident for everyone to see. Designs for the layout of the floors and displays became more honed and work to build the elements got underway.

The Covid lockdown brought the suspension to building work, disruption to the work of other contractors and to the Museum team working from home. Plans to launch and reopen the Museum are now finalised and will be as soon as is possible, in conjunction with the Government's guidelines.

The Museum, proudly looks forward to the reopening and welcoming the public to the new facilities and displays on offer.

Cllr Rebecca Denness
City of Ely Council Representative

FINANCIAL SITUATION 2020/2021

The City of Ely Council's financial situation during 2020/21 has been extremely difficult due to the pandemic. This has resulted in closure of the Maltings and Oliver Cromwell House, which has led to a considerable loss in income for the Council.

The Council has been able to apply for and successfully receive some Government funding, but this has not been large enough to offset the losses. Some Council staff have been furloughed and it has been possible to claim back some of these staff salaries through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Due to the circumstances that the Council has been operating under, expenditure has been less than normal, which has helped with the Council's financial situation.

The Council has had to set a realistic budget for the coming financial year and taken into account possible income levels for both the Maltings and Oliver Cromwell's House, due to the current Covid-19 pandemic and Government restrictions, resulting in both of these venues being unable to trade as normal. This will result in a much lower, than what would normally be budgeted, income for both venues. The Council has kept the increase on the precept to a minimum, to ensure the financial impact on parishioners is as small as possible

Tracey Coulson
Clerk to the Council