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**MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE CITY OF ELY COUNCIL HELD AT 7.00 PM ON MONDAY,  
4TH DECEMBER 2023 AT SESSIONS HOUSE, LYNN ROAD, ELY**

**PRESENT:** Mrs T Coulson – Clerk to the Council

Cllr C Phillips, Mayor

Cllr C Ní Dhónaill

Cllr M Wade

*County Cllr P Coutts*

Cllr R Wade

Cllr L Fox

Cllr R Trent

Cllr R Denness

Cllr M Banyard

Cllr P Gardner

**1. APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Warman, Morgan, Pitt, Moss-Eccardt, Austen and Holtzmann. The reasons for their absences were accepted.

**2. COUNCILLOR REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

There were no requests for dispensations.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON THE 30TH OCTOBER 2023 AND MATTERS ARISING**

Minutes of the last meeting held on the 30th October 2023 were proposed by Cllr Gardner and seconded by Cllr Denness as a correct record. This was unanimously agreed and signed as a true record. They were signed by the Chairman. Pages 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070 and 2071 refer. There were no matters arising.

**5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman reported that the Clerk, Estates Manager and himself had a further meeting with the Restorative Justice Service regarding the damage to the Skateboard park. What will happen next is only slowly taking shape. He updated councillors on the situations regarding all the boys and further updates will follow. He wanted to be able to pass on the thanks and congratulations of the Council to the people who put up the Christmas Lights. The Lights are a triumph and the centre of Ely as it goes into the Christmas period is looking very good indeed. He reported that he had recently had a meeting with two representatives of the local Muslim Association and as a result will be seeing Holly Chapman at ECDC Planning Department to discuss with her the progress of the planning application the Association has made regarding the Islamic Centre on Broad Street. Then, at a recent meeting with the Dean he expressed an interest in meeting members of the local Muslim community and he had been able to arrange an informal breakfast on the 18th December. He looked forward to good food, good conversation and the building of bridges.

## **5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS CONTINUED .....**

He had also had an interesting meeting with Scott Colling who is setting up a computer business in Ely and hoping to link that to organising a safe space for (young) gamers in the area. He will keep councillors informed of how this progresses. Cllr Ní Dhónaill agreed to forward details of a group which already operates, so they can be passed on to Mr Colling.

## **6. QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions as no members of the public were present.

## **7. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**

A written report was received from County Cllrs Coutts and A Whelan. A copy of which will be attached to the minutes. Cllr Coutts reported that he had raised Cllr Holtzmann's query from the last meeting in relation to light pollution from the new LED bulbs in street lighting columns. He had received a very detailed response which he had forwarded to her. As the project has now been signed off and is moving forward, he thought it might be hard to change at this stage. He had left with Cllr Holtzmann to respond further to County if she wished to. He informed Councillors that the Combined Authority had approved the Transport Infrastructure Plan, which will mean the provision of a safe crossing at the BP garage on the A142/A10 will move forward to the next stage of assessment. There are currently three options and this will go out for public consultation. The Chairman thanked Cllr Coutts for his commitment to the community, which was greatly appreciated.

*Cllr Coutts left the meeting at 7.19 pm.*

## **8. MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS & REPORT**

The Mayor had attended the Ely Rotary Bonfire night celebrations and judged the Guys; Careers Fair at the Cathedral; launch of the RBK carvery; Armistice Day wreath laying; Remembrance Sunday service at the Cathedral and wreath laying at the War Memorial; performance of Bugsy Malone at the Maltings; book launch of Battle of Heligoland; Thanksgiving Day service at the Cathedral; St Etheldreda's International lunch; Lakenheath Yuletide Celebration; Christmas Concert at St Marys Church by the dementia choir and attended the Kite Trust Queer Homecoming at Arbury.

## **9. PLANNING**

The Chairman gave a report on the planning meeting prior to Full Council. Cllr Denness informed members of Cllr Morgan's request for Full Council to consider and approve the Planning Committee's request that East Cambs District Council be requested to designate the land adjacent to 12 – 22 Holly Walk, and 10-11 Birch Close, Ely as a community asset. Both parcels of land have, for over 35 years, furthered and improved the social wellbeing and/or the social interests of the local community. The District Council has maintained both plots having declared them as open spaces as long ago as 1986. Neither parcels of land have direct access to the highway. Both plots are abundant with wildlife and the tree on Holly Walk has a TPO. This was unanimously agreed and a request will be submitted to ECDC.

## **10. INFORMATION ONLY ITEMS**

The following information only items were received and noted:-

Street Naming & Numbering:- Downham Road Farm, Downham Road, Ely

Notification of Street Closures:- Egremont Street, Ely – 1.11.23; Prickwillow Road, Ely – 7-9.11.23

## 11. COMMITTEE REPORTS

(i) PERSONNEL, FINANCE & GOVERNANCE – Cllr Ní Dhónaill presented a report of a meeting held on the 13th November, which was noted and approved. She thanked the Clerk for all the information and explanations she had provided when the budget for 2024/25 had been considered. This had been very useful and informative. Cllr Ní Dhónaill proposed the budget for 2024/25 be approved, with a precept of £798,600. This will be a 7.18% increase on a Council Tax band D property and will equate to an increase of approximately 14p per week. This was seconded by Cllr Denness and unanimously agreed. It was agreed the Council would join the White Ribbon Campaign as a supporter organisation at a cost of £150. Recommendations from the Communications & PR Working Group in relation to amendments to the Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy. Cllr Ní Dhónaill proposed the three revised standing orders be approved as provided by the Clerk. This was seconded by Cllr Banyard and unanimously agreed. The recommendation that the Council consider investment with CCLA was considered further. The Clerk had produced a report detailing the risk, returns and amount to be invested. After consideration of this report Cllr Ní Dhónaill proposed the Council moves forward with an investment of £500,000 in the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund. The three signatories for this Fund would be the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and past Mayor. The Clerk would be the correspondent for the account. This was seconded by Cllr Gardner and unanimously approved. The Committee would review the Investment Strategy at the next meeting.

(ii) CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT – No report as Committee had not met. The next meeting will be held on the 18th December 2023.

(iii) ASSETS - No report as Committee had not met.

(iv) TOURISM AND TOWN CENTRE – No report as Committee had not met. The next meeting will be held on the 11th December 2023. Cllr Banyard informed councillors there had been a recent visit to Ribe by some of the Guides and the Tourism and Town Centre Manager. This was felt to have been a very worthwhile and informative visit. The Clerk informed members the Chairman of the Ely Ribe Association would be attending the Full Council meeting on the 15th January 2024 to give a presentation about this visit.

## 12. REPORTS FROM EXTERNAL MEETINGS

Councillors noted reports from the following external meetings:-

Ely Ribe Association – notes of a meeting held on the 2nd November 2023. Cllr Denness had agreed to be the Council's third representative on the Association. A request would be made that the terms of reference are changed so that the Association do not have to have a representative from the Council present to meet.

City of Ely Allotments & Gardens Association notes of a meeting held on the 18th October 2023. Councillors expressed their concerns that they had not been consulted regarding the Council taking over the St Mary's flowerbed from the Association. The Clerk explained why and how this had been agreed. Cllr Denness informed Councillors she would be attending a meeting with the Deputy Clerk and representatives of the Association to discuss the updating of the agreement between the Association and the Council, which was very much out of date.

Paradise Sports Centre – Cllr Wade, the Council's representative on this body informed Councillors she had still never received any information from them about their meetings. The Clerk agreed to contact them again to try and ensure they made contact with her.

### **13 TO CONSIDER REPORT FROM CLLR DENNESS WITH REGARD TO THE LOCAL HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT BIDS**

Councillors considered the report from Cllr Denness with regard to proposed LHI bids. Cllr Denness proposed these two bids be approved so she could submit them from the Council. This was seconded by Cllr Ní Dhónaill and unanimously approved. The bids would be for A142 Stuntney Road traffic calming at Ben's Yard and Cam Drive to construct a pedestrian crossing .

### **14. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE WITH REGARD TO THE CCTV PROJECT**

The Clerk had provided an update with regard to the CCTV project which was noted. The Clerk had proposed the project be undertaken in two phases and had recommended, following the letter of intention to Openview, that phase one be given approval to commence. This would cover the new control room (£51,512.29) and upgrading of existing camera locations (£110,114.55). Cllr Wade proposed this recommendation be approved, which was seconded by Cllr Denness. A vote was taken with 8 councillors approving and 1 abstaining. The proposal was approved. Details regarding the maintenance cover costings, types of cameras and new camera locations were also noted. It was agreed the Clerk would ask the CCTV Co-ordinator to provide information regarding data on reviewing of incidents and outcomes. Phase two will involve consideration of camera types and locations before a decision to move forward is agreed. The Clerk will provide information as requested by Councillors.

### **15. FINANCE**

Cllr Gardner proposed these all be approved, which was seconded by Cllr Banyard and unanimously approved.

#### *Direct debit payments and BACS payments*

ECDC	200.00	Paid by direct debit
ECDC	293.00	Paid by direct debit
ECDC	2095.00	Paid by direct debit
ECDC	524.00	Paid by direct debit
ECDC	499.00	Paid by direct debit
ECDC	200.00	Paid by direct debit
ECDC	293.00	Paid by direct debit
ECDC	2095.00	Paid by direct debit
ECDC	524.00	Paid by direct debit
ECDC	499.00	Paid by direct debit
FuelGenie	296.35	Paid by direct debit
FuelGenie	535.17	Paid by direct debit
Worldpay	217.12	Paid by direct debit
Worldpay	204.44	Paid by direct debit
British Telecommunications	83.46	Paid by direct debit
ESPO	92.92	Paid by direct debit
ESPO	221.52	Paid by direct debit
Siemens Financial Services Ltd	452.40	Paid by direct debit
Barclays	140.97	Paid by direct debit
British Telecommunications	298.36	Paid by direct debit
Cybertill Ltd	74.82	Paid by direct debit
Bidfood Ltd	776.04	Paid by direct debit
Francotyp Postalia Ltd	67.80	Paid by direct debit
Virgin Media	62.40	Paid by direct debit
Virgin Media	62.40	Paid by direct debit

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MAYOR  
15th January 2024

**15. FINANCE CONTINUED .....**

Virgin Media	62.40	Paid by direct debit
Virgin Media	62.40	Paid by direct debit
Worldpay	194.19	Paid by direct debit
Worldpay	347.82	Paid by direct debit
Liquidline Ltd	479.30	Paid by direct debit
Greene King Brewing & Retail Ltd	908.76	Paid by direct debit
ESPO	118.10	Paid by direct debit
ESPO	312.60	Paid by direct debit
ESPO	331.89	Paid by direct debit
ESPO	1116.76	Paid by direct debit
ESPO	656.77	Paid by direct debit
Greene King Brewing & Retail Ltd	1242.68	Paid by direct debit
Barclaycard	1154.62	Paid by direct debit
EE Ltd	22.80	Paid by direct debit
SSE Energy Supply Ltd	79.86	Paid by direct debit
TotalEnergies Gas & Power Ltd	7490.01	Paid by direct debit
TotalEnergies Gas & Power Ltd	124.63	Paid by direct debit
TotalEnergies Gas & Power Ltd	21.58	Paid by direct debit
TotalEnergies Gas & Power Ltd	521.45	Paid by direct debit
TotalEnergies Gas & Power Ltd	303.32	Paid by direct debit
Barclays	162.89	Paid by direct debit
Lex Autolease	772.90	Paid by direct debit
British Telecommunications	34.16	Paid by direct debit
British Telecommunications	56.34	Paid by direct debit
Greene King Brewing & Retail Ltd	1565.10	Paid by direct debit
We Are Blushed Ltd	638.00	Paid by BACS
Trade UK	107.97	Paid by BACS
Ely Tool Hire Ltd	254.40	Paid by BACS
Prestige Fire Safety Ltd	840.00	Paid by BACS
Human Capital Department	178.80	Paid by BACS
Bacon Lightning Protection & Maintenance Ltd	528.00	Paid by BACS
Ely Cathedral	90.00	Paid by BACS
L E Enterprices	937.50	Paid by BACS
Probitas Solutions Ltd	408.00	Paid by BACS
Welford Christmas Tree Farm	2460.00	Paid by BACS
Kevin Robinson	110.52	Paid by BACS
Gem Heating Solutions Ltd	504.00	Paid by BACS
Grocers Brokers Ltd	100.80	Paid by BACS
Probitas Solutions Ltd	306.00	Paid by BACS
Ellgia Ltd	385.38	Paid by BACS
R Neale	55.00	Paid by BACS
English Eden	340.80	Paid by BACS
D Holt	75.00	Paid by BACS
G & G Gallo Enterprises Ltd	1273.21	Paid by BACS
Warren Access	2504.68	Paid by BACS
Caterfix Ltd	1314.00	Paid by BACS
Cambridge Marketing Ltd	322.00	Paid by BACS

**15. FINANCE CONTINUED .....**

RGP Security Services Ltd	222.00	Paid by BACS
CamAlarms Ltd	1290.00	Paid by BACS
Shefs	1864.20	Paid by BACS
David J Richards Ltd	297.70	Paid by BACS
We Are Blushed Ltd	26.40	Paid by BACS
E R Copley	13.50	Paid by BACS
Calico Cottage	544.80	Paid by BACS
K J French	40.00	Paid by BACS
1094 (Ely) Squadron ATC	85.00	Paid by BACS
Shefs	380.00	Paid by BACS
Trade UK Ltd	494.72	Paid by BACS
Studio Nova Ltd	96.00	Paid by BACS
Warren Access	1209.60	Paid by BACS
Ely Museum	308.50	Paid by BACS
G & G Gallo Enterprises Ltd	1691.09	Paid by BACS
East Air Conditioning Services Ltd	270.00	Paid by BACS
Ely Magazine	175.00	Paid by BACS
Mr M Iddon	229.90	Paid by BACS
We Are Blushed Ltd	648.00	Paid by BACS
RGP Security Services Ltd	222.00	Paid by BACS
Shefs	2994.00	Paid by BACS
ATS Heritage	234.00	Paid by BACS
Gem Heating Solutions Ltd	186.00	Paid by BACS

*The following invoices had already been paid prior to the Full Council, due to due date of payment with the approval of the Chairman*

Cambs Artistic Roller			
Skating Club	1000.00	114526	(grant/Section 137)
1st Ely Rangers	240.00	114527	(grant/Section 137)
The Kite Trust	752.00	114528	(grant/Section 137)
Campaign Amateur Theatre	500.00	114529	(grant/Section 137)
Good Vibes Local CIC	250.00	114530	(grant/Section 137)
Friends of Ely St John's			
Primary School	1000.00	114531	(grant/Section 137)
Lets Run Girls Ely	250.00	114532	(grant/Section 137)

*The following invoices had not been paid prior to the meeting*

City of Ely Allotments &		
Gardens Association	298.50	114533
A Bennett	16.48	114534
G & J Peck Ltd	170.90	114535
SLCC	418.00	114536
Simpson's Nurseries Ltd	346.54	114537
Jewson Ltd	118.63	114538
Harper Collins Publishers	190.15	114539
City Cycle Centre	74.09	114540
Amazon Payments UK Ltd	320.71	114541
Gordon Harrison	107.86	114542

**15. FINANCE CONTINUED .....**

C Phillips	98.30	114543
Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal	55.00	114544
ESPO	55.44	114545
First Aid Training Services Ltd	630.00	114546
Gem Heating Solutions Ltd	1264.61	Paid by BACS
G & G Gallo Enterprises Ltd	1013.45	Paid by BACS
LE Enterprises	631.25	Paid by BACS
Human Capital Department Ltd	178.80	Paid by BACS
Thompson Media Partners Ltd	225.00	Paid by BACS
S Slezacek	636.00	Paid by BACS
Ellgia Ltd	270.59	Paid by BACS
Greene King Brewing & Retailing Ltd	1075.18	Paid by direct debit
Bidfood	1385.31	Paid by direct debit
British Telecommunications Ltd	78.66	Paid by direct debit
British Telecommunications Ltd	46.54	Paid by direct debit
British Telecommunications Ltd	297.89	Paid by direct debit
Fuelgenie	426.16	Paid by direct debit
Otis Ltd	1615.10	114547
ESPO	84.96	114545
Aztek Services Ltd	628.74	114548
Burrows Newsagents	144.00	114550
Amazon Payments UK Ltd	47.25	114549
HM Revenue & Customs	544.11	114551
S Thompson	4.00	114552
City Cycle Centre	32.15	114553
Churches Fire Security Ltd	460.32	114554

**Payments relating to staff since meeting on the 30th October 2023**

Salaries and wages	£53,861.93
Inland Revenue (tax & NI)	£11,187.24
Pension fund payments	£11,225.17

**Members noted and approved the bank reconciliations against the accounts for the periods ending 31st October 2023 and 30th November 2023**

*The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.*





# Cllrs Piers Coutts and Alison Whelan

MONTHLY REPORT NOVEMBER 2023

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## STRATEGY RESOURCES & PERFORMANCE

### Mind the [budget] gap

Cambridgeshire County Council's estimated budget gap for 2024/25 has increased from a predicted £16M to more than £23M—largely due to increases in demand for services and inflationary pressure. Without action being taken this gap will grow, and it is predicted to be more than £20M in the following year, and a further £19M and more the year after that.

Cambridgeshire is not alone. The Local Government Association currently reports that councils across the country face an 'inflationary storm' with a predicted £4Bn funding gap over the next two years.

A report from the Council's Chief Executive Stephen Moir and Executive Director of Finance and Resources Michael Hudson says:

"In 2023-24, pressures on our budget have arisen principally due to several very high-cost children's social care placements and a delay in receiving income from a newly constructed solar farm (which requires connection to the electricity grid). In addition, we are seeing that demand for bed-based care for older people is also rising, following a period of reduction in demand and then stability stretching back for some time, to the beginning of the pandemic."

The report also points to wider national and international issues which have an impact on the council's pressures—such as interest rates which the Bank of England has said are likely to remain above five per cent until 2026. This will affect all goods and services the council buys, the cost of borrowing, and pay award costs for council workers as well as for a large externally commissioned workforce which includes staff working in residential care for vulnerable adults and children.

The report highlights how all services in the council have been the subject of a comprehensive exercise to find efficiencies, alongside a number of specific reviews into particularly high cost areas such as home to school transport, children's social care placements, and high levels of historic adult social care debt.

Proposals to set the Council's 2024/5 budget will be discussed by councillors in December before a period of scrutiny during January, including an opportunity for residents to comment on the plans.

## Quality of life survey shows mixed picture

Most Cambridgeshire residents feel happy and safe in the county, well connected to their local communities, and believe it's a great place to raise children.

That's the headline finding of the County Council's first annual Quality of Life survey involving more than 5,500 residents. But the news is less good for some specific groups, with a stark finding that loneliness in Cambridgeshire is far higher than the national average. Loneliness was most likely to be reported by those aged 18 to 25, who also reported more struggles with their mental health.

The County Council commissioned the report from national independent market research agency Thinks Insight and Strategy, and plans to use the results to help councillors set business plan and budget priorities for the coming five years. The survey will also be used to inform the Public Health Joint Needs Assessment, a mandatory document which local organisations use to identify the health and wellbeing needs of a local population.

The survey found the council itself plays a relatively trusted role in residents' lives, with just over half of residents trusting it to make decisions. Residents' views about whether the council acts on their concerns and delivers value for money were in line with Local Government Association averages for England. Satisfaction with council services was mixed—highest across library, waste management, street lighting, and registration services, and lowest in road and pavement maintenance.

Residents reported high concerns about the cost of living and many said they were changing their behaviour because of it. 48 per cent have cut back on heating use, 27 per cent have cut back on nutritious food, eight per cent have used a foodbank and nine per cent have stopped using prescription medicines. The council intends to run the survey again next year.

**84%** feel safe in their local community

**72%** report high or very high levels of happiness

**52%** of 18-24s feel lonely—compared to only 18% of those aged 55+

**37%** have struggled with mental health (61% of 18-24s, 59% of 25-34s)

**52%** trust the council to make decisions about services

**44%** think the council delivers value for money (national benchmark 42%)

**86%** are concerned about cost of living increases

**48%** have cut back on heating use

## FLOODING

### Storm Babet

Storm Babet hit Cambridgeshire on Friday 20 October, leaving some households with external or even internal flooding to their homes, or without flushing toilets, as well as seeing a number of roads closed. County Council highways officers have been working through the various incidents logged, and the Flood & Water team is pulling together an overall picture of events.

If you were affected by flooding, and have not yet reported it to the County Council, please do so, as it is really important to build up a full picture of what happened.

- You can report flood issues affecting your home or property at **[cambridgeshire-self.achieveservice.com/service/Flood\\_reporting](https://cambridgeshire-self.achieveservice.com/service/Flood_reporting)** (This is *not* the place to report flooding in an emergency.)
- You can report highways-related flooding (blocked road drains, sewers, gullies, for example) at **[highwaysreporting.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](https://highwaysreporting.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)**

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## FULL COUNCIL

### Going through the motions

Five motions for debate as usual generated more heat than light at the Full Council meeting on 17 October.

1. A motion instructing the County Council's Chief Executive to convene a meeting to discuss how to move forward after the collapse of proposals for road charging in Cambridge was voted down as being devoid of solutions to the county's transport problems.
  2. Another motion promoted the divisive notion of a 'war on motorists' to argue that planners should return to the old ways of 'predict and provide' to allow for more and more cars, rather than the 'monitor and manage' approach of seeking to avoid developments leading to congested roads and lack of public transport options. This was also defeated.
  3. A third motion called for the publication of the council's action plan for addressing the (eye-wateringly expensive) problem of the many 'soil-affected' roads in the county. An amendment to improve the motion was accepted by the mover, and it was agreed unanimously.
  4. A fourth motion was again altered to accommodate an amendment, and was also agreed unanimously. This asks officers to bring forward a report on what can be done to stop lorries rat-running along the A1421 from Haddenham crossroads to Witcham Toll.
  5. Finally, a motion on plans to review the council's policy on weed control was amended and then approved. The review was already scheduled for January 2024.
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## ADULTS & HEALTH

### Be Winter Wise

The County Council has launched its *Be Winter Wise* campaign to help residents with information and advice throughout the winter. Its aim is to draw together a range of services, activities and offers, keeping communities across Cambridgeshire informed and prepared to stay safe and healthy during the winter months of 2023/24—and to signpost to services offered by partners.

The campaign links together everything from winter gritting and road safety activities to falls prevention, flu vaccination support, and the Household Support Fund which helps people with urgent expenses, or by issuing vouchers to every child eligible for free school meals in the half term and Christmas holidays, under a single *Be Winter Wise* banner.

Activities include

- Work being carried out on the county's road network, including gritting, gully and drain clearance, and getting ahead of expected impacts of bad weather.
- Road safety activities and advice, such as encouraging pedestrians, cyclists and motorists to wear reflective clothing, check lights and brakes, and always travel according to road conditions.
- Information to help residents stay warm and well through the colder months, with an emphasis on activities to reduce loneliness and support mental as well as physical health.
- Further work to promote the council's Household Support Fund, open to eligible residents who are most affected by the cost of living crisis.
- Supporting NHS colleagues by promoting flu, COVID and MMR jobs to eligible groups.

For more information, search on social media for #BeWinterWise

### Care quality initiative

A new initiative to improve the quality of care and support for Cambridgeshire residents has been approved by the council's Adults and Health Committee and is to be launched by the County Council.

The new initiative for the adult social care workforce, supported by investment of over £1M, seeks to address problems of recruitment and retention in the sector, support skills development, and drive up quality of services.

The County Council already requires care providers with whom it contracts to pay the Real Living Wage. The Council will now also seek to embed the new approach to build skills in the workforce into future contracts with care providers. A high quality Care Certificate will be offered by the Council at low cost to care providers and to care workers themselves.

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## CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

### Supermarket vouchers continue

The supermarket voucher scheme continued to operate in the October half term for all eligible families in Cambridgeshire.

Cambridgeshire County Council will run the scheme until the February 2024 half term using the Household Support Fund from the Department for Work & Pensions and additional funding provided by the Council. Eligible families were automatically sent a £15 voucher via email or text on Saturday 21 October. The voucher can be used at a choice of ten supermarkets.

The voucher scheme has been a huge success since it was introduced and appreciated keenly by families struggling in the current financial climate. A survey revealed that over seventy per cent of families said the vouchers had helped them cope with the rising cost of living.

### Appeal volunteers needed

Volunteers are urgently needed to hear appeals when children are not offered a place at their preferred school.

All parents or carers have the right to make an appeal to an independent appeal panel if their child is not offered a place at their preferred school. The role of the panel is to decide whether a child who has been refused a place by the County Council should be given a place.

All parties involved must be given an appeal hearing that is transparent, accessible, independent and impartial. The appeal panel is independent of the local authority and its decisions are binding on all parties, unless overturned by the courts.

Volunteers will sit on the independent admission appeal panels and ensure that parents feel they have had a fair and independent hearing and have been given every opportunity to put their case and have been taken seriously.

Panel members must be able to listen to two sides of a case and weigh up evidence objectively and impartially. They must also be able to:

- Communicate effectively with a wide range of people
- Read and assess information and identify key points
- Listen to key information
- Ask questions to obtain information and clarify points being made
- Analyse information and use it to form opinions and conclusions
- Obtain and weigh up evidence to reach a decision
- Work as part of a team, take advice and develop their own skills

All volunteer Panel Members receive initial and annual refresher training and will be fully supported by the Appeals Service. The time commitment depends on

how much time volunteers are willing to give. While appeals are held throughout the year, the peak months are between April and July. The appeals are arranged either for half a day or a full day. Hearings are currently held online using Microsoft Teams.

Anyone interested in applying or who would like an informal chat about the role should contact [clare.cronk@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:clare.cronk@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

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## **COMMUNITIES SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION (COSMIC)**

### **Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund**

Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund is a £1M fund to help upgrade and improve community buildings and assets to better meet the needs of the families, households and communities who use them.

Many expressions of interest were received by the September deadline. More than 85 per cent of them met the eligibility criteria and those applicants have been invited to submit a full proposal. This next stage will be competitive, with only one in four applications likely to be successful.

All applicants who have made it through to this second stage were invited to attend one of three virtual briefing sessions:

- Monday 30 October 4:00-5:00PM
- Tuesday 31 October 6:30-7:30PM
- Wednesday 1 November 12:00-1:00PM

East Cambridgeshire applications which have made it to this stage have come from Burwell, Brinkley, Coveney, Ely, Haddenham, Kirtling, Little Downham, Little Thetford, Littleport, Mepal, Soham, Stetchworth, Stuntney, Sutton and Witchford.

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## **ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT**

### **Swaffham Prior Community Heat Network**

E&GI chair Cllr Lorna Dupre joined residents, contractors, council officers and others at the village hall in Swaffham Prior recently to celebrate the anniversary of the first connections to the new renewable energy centre.

100 external connections are now completed, and 65 properties are fully connected to the heat network. Connections will recommence in Spring. The council is keen to complete these in batches to ensure works are carried out effectively and efficiently and disruption is minimised. Further testing of the heat network will take place over the winter to optimise the system.

## Climate scorecard

Campaigning organisation Climate Emergency UK once again published a 'scorecard' for each council to measure how it was responding to climate change. As the methodology changes every year it is not possible to compare present against past scores.

Cambridgeshire was ranked fifth out of all county councils on this year's scorecard, with a gold star for our work on decarbonising buildings and heating. We scored lower than average on biodiversity, and on waste reduction and food. This is unsurprising, given that Cambridgeshire is the most biodiversity-deprived county in the country, and that the Waterbeach waste facility is out of action while the council and its contractor Thalia seek to resolve compliance issues.

<https://councilclimatescorecards.uk/scoring/county/>

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## HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

### Getting Cambridgeshire's roads winter ready

Cambridgeshire's gritting crew spent several nights in mid-October carrying out a trial run ahead of winter. Gritters including Buzz Ice Year and David Grittenborough were on the roads, along with quad bikes on cycle routes in Cambridge.

The salt domes and barns have already been filled with 10,000 tonnes of rock salt ready for the start of the cold season.

Last year gritting crews went out 51 times, many of them working throughout the night and early hours. Anyone interested in volunteering to help the council grit Cambridgeshire during the winter months is invited to visit the council's website to find out how they and the local community can get involved.

[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/help-with-gritting/](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/help-with-gritting/)

### 20MPH schemes—the next round

The council plans to reopen the window for new applications for 20MPH funding from Monday 15 January 2024, and close it on Friday 15 March 2024 at 5:00PM. There was intense interest from parish councils in this opportunity, showing how much popular support there is for road safety and speed reduction initiatives.

In the meantime, the council plans to review and update its 20MPH website pages to provide additional information and assistance to applicants.

### HS2: will there be winners?

The sudden announcement by the Government in October of the scrapping of HS2 to Manchester was followed by a list of transport schemes across the country that would receive a share of the funding instead. This list was then

withdrawn from the Government website, with the explanation that these projects were simply 'illustrations'.

In East Cambridgeshire these illustrations included Ely railway junction and the A10 between Ely and the A14. However it is not clear how much money there will be to reinvest in genuinely new transport projects.

### **The Ely 20mph scheme**

The long-awaited review of the consultation on the proposed Ely-wide 20mph scheme has been completed, and the decision on whether to go ahead will take place in the next two weeks. Funding is in place as long as it can be completed by the end of March 2024, so if the decision is positive we should expect to see work begin on new signage early in the new year

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### **Cllrs Alison Whelan and Piers Coutts**

County Councillors for Ely North and Ely South