



CITY OF ELY COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

TO THE

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

25TH MARCH 2024

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**Clerk to the Council
Deputy Clerk to the Council**

**Tracey Coulson
Sarah Jay**

COUNCILLORS

WEST WARD

Vacancy

Sue Austen 5 Mayfield Close, Ely CB6 3AB Tel: 663928

Rebecca Denness 9 West Fen Road, Ely CB6 1AL Tel: 07950 604521

Christopher Phillips 7 Columbine Road, Ely CB6 3WL Tel: 669940

Dian Warman 38 Back Hill, Ely CB7 4BZ Tel: 666134

Vacancy

EAST WARD

Mary Wade 42 Gateway Gardens, Ely CB6 3DE Tel: 07789303740

Kathrin Holtzmann 43 Downham Road, Ely CB6 1AQ Tel: 07967520619

Laura Fox c/o Sessions House, Lynn Road, Ely CB7 4EG Tel: 661016

CATHEDRAL

Michael Banyard 3 Houghton Gardens, Ely CB7 4JN Tel: 969304

NORTH WARD

Richard Morgan 23 Merivale Way, Ely CB7 4GQ Tel: 667905

Rupert Moss-Eccardt 7 Prickwillow Road, Queen Adelaide, Ely CB7 4SH Tel: 772725

Rebecca Ward c/o Sessions House, Lynn Road, Ely CB7 4EG Tel: 661016

Ross Trent 62 St John's Road, Ely CB6 3BE Tel: 07960863994

Caoimhe Ní Dhónaill 41 West Fen Road, Ely CB6 1AN Tel: 07927557304

**Chairman of the Council and Mayor of the City of Ely is Councillor Chris Phillips
Deputy Chairman of the Council and Deputy Mayor of the City of Ely is Councillor Rebecca Denness**

Chairman's Annual Report

Elections to the City of Ely Council took place on 4th May 2023 and resulted in the return of nine councillors. In wards where insufficient nominations left vacancies new members were appointed by co-option to bring the Council's membership up to its usual fifteen. Some weeks after this process had been completed Cllr Mary Robinson resigned her seat and at a by-election on 21st September 2023, Cllr Ross Trent was returned as a representative of Ely North ward. At the time of writing two vacancies exist in Ely West ward following the resignations of Cllr Robert Pitt and Cllr Pip Gardner.

For the year 2023-24 Cllr Chris Phillips has served as Mayor and Chair of the Council while Cllr Rebecca Denness has served as Deputy Mayor and Deputy Chairman.

The various committees, sub-committees and working groups of the Council have met regularly throughout the year and their work is detailed in separate reports within this document. The Council's responsibilities within the community have in no way diminished in recent years and if anything involvement in community activities, advocacy work and promotion of the City as a good place to live, work and visit has expanded.

The Council is fortunate to have hard working and professional staff to administer its day-to-day running and thanks are due to the Clerk of the Council, Mrs Tracey Coulson and her colleagues Mrs Sarah Jay and Mrs Marianne Pickering for their contributions. Mrs Anna Bennett and the staff of Oliver Cromwell's House have worked tirelessly to market and promote this important tourist attraction and Lola Howell has continued, as Venue Manager, to ensure the ongoing success of the Maltings as a community and entertainment centre. The Estates team under the leadership of Richard Delahaye has worked tirelessly throughout the year at the Cemetery and around the city with outstanding success. A special word of thanks should also go to the volunteers who contribute so much – running the allotments, for example, and putting up Ely's Christmas Lights display which this year had such positive reviews on social media.

As Chair of the Council it has been a privilege and a pleasure to work with councillor colleagues all of whom have brought their own gifts and talents to the Council table and made their contributions throughout the year.

Cllr Chris Phillips
Chairman of the Council

Planning Committees

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 one with Crest Nicholson). All meetings are open to members of the public. 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 over development of the site, insufficient access, 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. We have also been consulted where Tree Preservation Orders have been proposed.

Cllr Richard Morgan
Chairman – Planning Committees

Personnel, Finance and Governance Committee

This Committee (also called PF&G) has a main responsibility for managing the Council's finances, personnel and setting the annual budget. A number of sub-committees and working groups feed into this Committee, more of which can be learned about below.

The City of Ely Council has again successfully distributed funds to local charitable organisations from the rents of the shared housing scheme established thirty years ago. This allows local organisations to apply for grants which help finance new activities. We are delighted this year to have contributed to the very successful Campaign Amateur Theatre production of Bugsy Malone, in November 2023, where a fantastic cast of Ely children took part in a musical extravaganza. Other organisations that received funding from this source include: The Stained Glass Museum and Babylon Arts, the Ely Arts Festival, Voluntary & Community Action East Cambridgeshire, The Kite Trust, 1st Ely Rangers, and the Friends of Ely St John's Primary. We also continued our support for Ely Museum and we are a proud supporter of their continued work to preserve the history of Ely.

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

Like many organisations, the Council has been hit with the impact of the cost of living crisis, with expenses for water, gas, and electricity now much higher than before. With our responsibility over the Maltings, Oliver Cromwell House and Sessions House, we have had a difficult financial year to contend with, and this looks likely to continue. We therefore voted in November to raise the precept by 7.18% which equates to an increase of approximately 14p per week. In addition, in order to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the Council, this year we voted to begin to invest some of our returns in low-risk investment opportunities with CCLA.

This year, we were very lucky to elect a Youth Lead, Cllr Pip Gardner, who created the Ely Children and Young People's Action Plan 2023-2025 to focus on ways that City of Ely Council could better cater to young people within the City. Unfortunately, Cllr Gardner has had to resign from their position on the Council, but the Committee is hoping to continue on the great work they started on the Youth Plan. Initial funding has been given to a project to engage young people while improving the access and safety of the Leisure Village Underpass via CIL funds.

Sadly, this year the Town Crier has resigned. We are hoping to have a competition for a new Town Crier this year, and we welcome all interested parties to take part.

Due to the Clerk's obtaining the CiLCA qualification, the Council now has General Power of Competence which grants the Council a wider range of allowable activity to support the betterment of the City. Congratulations to Mrs Coulson for this achievement.

Cllr Caoimhe Ní Dhónaill
Chairman – Personnel, Finance and Governance Committee

Assets Committee

The Assets Committee has met regularly throughout the year and its wide remit has meant that a good deal of Council business has come its way.

The Sessions House has continued to house the Council's office and to host various events. The Maltings has been well used throughout the year and has hosted all sorts of entertainment as well as weddings, conferences and fairs. It is well established as a major community asset for Ely and the surrounding area and the new retractable seating has very much added to the comfort of the building and we continue to upgrade the building with new windows for the foyer and Kempen room, and a new stairlift.

The Maltings staff and city councillors continue to make every effort to work with local residents in resolving noise issues and there are now regular meetings where concerns are raised, problems identified and solutions discussed.

The Maltings Cottage: the City Council holds a 25-year lease from the District Council. There has been significant movement of the building because of its closeness to the river. We are awaiting a report from our landlords regarding a Report from Zurich Insurance.

The City Council is responsible for the City of Ely Cemetery and for various play areas around the City. The latter have been renovated and upgraded and continue to be popular and well-used. A new trim trail has been erected between West Fen Road and Alexander Chase. In the cemetery we have now created a sensory garden which has become a pleasant place for people to come and remember loved ones and also a garden of remembrance where those dead and long forgotten, with a special emphasis on children, can be commemorated. The garden has been named the 'Rose Appleyard Garden' after a girl who died of typhus during one of the outbreaks that regularly affected Victorian Ely.

In the centre of the garden a special oak tree has been planted to remember the life of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. The flowers and shrubs planted have been chosen for their appeal to disabled and non-disabled visitors and all pathways have been designed for easy access. New seats have been erected and appropriate signage will explain the purpose of the site. Elsewhere in the Cemetery fifteen trees have been planted to commemorate the late Queen's Jubilee – fifteen for the number of councillors who serve on the City Council. The interior of the Cemetery chapel has also seen some minor improvements but a recent fall of masonry has alerted the Council to a probable repair programme.

Tours of the Cemetery have continued to attract 'full houses' but the Friends of Ely Cemetery has struggled since the death of its chairman – the late Cllr Arnie Arnold. It is hoped that the group can be revitalised and engage volunteers in such projects as gardening, caring for graves and researching family histories.

Cllr Richard Morgan
Chairman – Assets Committee

Climate and Environment Committee

The year started welcoming new Council members to the group bringing expertise, ideas and energy.

The Committee's climate plan was updated. As actions affect all areas of the Council, a new reporting system is required to accommodate the work and the committee will address that in the next Mayoral year.

Highways

City of Ely Council has been a long-time supporter of 20mph for Ely and seeing it being realised is good news. Whilst there has been criticism of the initiative, as short, medium and long term advantages, such as greater safety for pedestrians and cyclists, less congestion and healthier air, are seen these outweigh journeys taking a few seconds longer.

Two Highway Improvement bids were submitted to the County Council for a crossing on Cam Drive, intended particularly for youngsters enroute to and from school and signs for reduced speed on the A142 at Stuntney near Ben's Yard. The outcomes are expected later in the year.

A list of proposals for the next round is being added to as ideas come through from the community.

The solar lights set into paths beside the river and in Cherry Hill Park were replaced and repaired this year.

Otherwise, the Council Committee continues to manage among other things, the maintenance of St Mary's Garden, trees in its ownership, replacement of dog bins and the contract for the wonderful planting around the centre of the City.

Cllr Rebecca Denness
Chairman - Climate and Environment Committee

Tourism and Town Centre Committee

2023 was another successful year for Visit Ely. Admissions to Oliver Cromwell's House (OCH) have once again risen. Last year was the first year, since the pandemic, that we welcomed back students from some overseas countries.

The City of Ely is extremely lucky to have such a fantastic team who promote local services, events and traders to both tourist and residents and continue to go above and beyond year on year.

Tourist Information Centre

The tourist information centre is continually proving very popular, serving those who wish to tour OCH and/or would like information about the local area, events and accommodation. The shop now stocks food, drinks, and gifts from local producers and this has become extremely successful with items such as jams, beers, postcards and magnets being the most popular.

Combination Tours

We now provide bespoke tours for coach parties for their individual requirements. This can include 2 attractions and a boat trip for instance or whatever the group bookings require and is slowly growing as it becomes more well know and publicised. This has resulted in an increase in coach groups visiting the City. The Ely Experience ticket (four attractions in one day) is continuing to sell well.

Events /Tours

The normal annual events were held, Eel Day, Food & Drink weekend, Armed Forces Day and Heritage open days. However, this year Apple day and Harvest Fayre proved so popular with venders that it was held on both Palace and St Marys Green.

Once again, the tours and walks proved to be popular with many selling out. This year we further utilised the Sessions House. In November we held an immersive theatrical experience called Trials and Terror at Sessions House which was a sellout.

This year we recruited several new guides, who had to take an exam and a practical test before they were provided with the additional training they needed for the role.

Digital Signage

Last year Digital signage boards were installed around the city providing information for both visitors and residents. It provides a wide range of information including but not limited to, events, local facilities, trails, attractions, places to eat and shop. There is also an Ely app that can be downloaded and contains the same information as the signage boards.

I would like to thank the Tourism and Town Centre Manager, Anna Bennett and her team for all their hard work and enthusiasm. I would also like to thank Annabel Reddick for all the work she has put into liaising with the local traders and Matthew Routledge for all his work on the digital signage boards.

Cllr Dian Warman
Chairman - Tourism and Town Centre Committee

CIL Sub-Committee

The CIL Sub-Committee operates as a sub-committee of the Personnel, Finance and Governance Committee of the Council and makes recommendations to those bodies regarding the use of CIL funds. During the 2023-24 Council year the sub-committee has recommended the following projects:

Meeting of 25th September 2023

Upgrade to fencing at the play area in The Park - £15,000

Fitness equipment between Morley Drive and West Fen Road - £21,273

Repair of lamps at the cathedral - £7,266.69

Meeting of 23rd January 2024

Refurbishment of the solar light pathways in the Park and along the Riverside - £8,582.70

Ely Youth artwork project at Leisure Village underpass - £5,257.82

Full Council approved all of the above.

Cllr C Phillips

Chairman - CIL Sub-Committee

Christmas Lights Sub-Committee

Christmas Lights is a sub-committee of staff, volunteers and 2 councillors, which reports to the Assets Committee. A close relationship is maintained with community volunteers.

The Christmas Lights team that erects the lights is ably led by Mike Chinery-Colyer, who coordinates the team throughout the year. He is supported by volunteers, USAF servicemen and women, and the Council's Estates team.

Planning designs for the lights and the tree starts early in the year, with a lot of work going on behind the scenes to ensure everything is booked, delivered and ready for the lights to start being put up at the end of October. Mike and his team are out in all weathers, over 5 weekends, starting early to ensure the City's display is ready in time for the Christmas festivities.

The City of Ely Council is grateful to all staff, volunteers and local businesses that help and support the lights, as without this, Ely would not have the wonderful displays and tree we all enjoy at Christmas.

The Council, staff and Christmas Lights Team look forward to bringing the Christmas lights to the Parishioners and visitors to the City once again in 2024.

Sarah Jay
Deputy Clerk

ELY RIBE ASSOCIATION

The Chairman, Howard Macmillan, stepped down at the AGM in September 2023, and we thank him for his years of committed service to the Association and its aims.

Our purpose, with the support of the City of Ely Council, is to foster and promote the city's long-standing town twinning link with Ribe in south-west Jutland in Denmark. This is achieved through visits and exchanges, and by way of social events locally, bringing members together throughout the year.

This year saw the first large group visit since before Covid and lockdown. From 12th - 15th May 2023 we welcomed 18 visitors from the twinning organisation in Ribe. Local Association members and Guides from Visit Ely and the Cathedral hosted and volunteered across the weekend. Careful planning and a good deal of hard work ensured that our new accommodation model worked well, with half of the guests staying with Association members and the remainder staying at the Lamb Hotel. Assigning local hosts to people accommodated at the hotel, to accompany them on guided walks and on our trip out to Wicken Fen on the Saturday afternoon for example, meant that everyone could feel fully involved.

The costs of the weekend, including the welcome event at the Maltings, coach transport for our guests from and back to the airport, their entertainment to a Twinning Dinner at Ely City Golf Club and souvenir gifts from local charity EARTH, were covered by grant funding from the City of Ely Council and by the Association. Members were asked to contribute the costs of their meals at the Dinner, and the response was excellent. These contributions to what was an enjoyable and successful visit were gratefully received. It is now Ely's 'turn' for a large group visit to Ribe, for which planning will start shortly.

In November 2023 a group of 4 Ely City Guides together with the Tourism and Town Centre Manager visited Ribe on the return leg of the work experience exchange that had brought a similar number of Ribe Guides to Ely in October 2022. This Association initiative had already proved productive in consolidating the link with our twin town and from the perspective of Visit Ely. It was pleasing to have its staff development value to the future of the tourism offer in Ely recognised in the City Council's agreement to cover the Guides' travel costs for this trip. The group took part in a full programme, shadowing their counterparts across the range of tours and experiences available to tourists visiting Ribe. From the trip they took away a number of practical ideas already implemented in the Visit Ely guided tours and walks programme for this year as well as firm, ongoing links with a committed and dynamic team with which they have much in common.

Membership of the Association has remained stable overall at just over 30, with new members balancing members choosing not to renew. The Guides' exchange has brought a number of new members, and work is progressing on a similar small group exchange model linking members of the local artists' community with like-minded creatives in Ribe.

As the town twinning approaches its 70th anniversary in 2026, the Association's focus is firmly fixed as ever on communicating our interest and enthusiasm to as wide an audience as possible. In April this year we will mount an exhibition in Ely Library, featuring displays showcasing some of the many high points in this history, together with an illustrated talk, and members on hand at various points to share their experiences and hopefully generate new

interest in a partnership with so much to offer for all between two forward and outward looking places.

Anne Heffernan
Chair, Ely Ribe Association

CITY OF ELY ALLOTMENTS and GARDENS ASSOCIATION

REPORT ON THE ALLOTMENT YEAR 2023/2024

GENERAL COMMENTS:

This was another challenging year due to the weather. The warm, wet weather in April and May lead to rampant growth which was followed again by heat and drought. The current extremely wet weather suggests that this trend will be continuing into the future. We can only hope that the threatened prolonged cold spell isn't as bad as the doom-mongers in the press keep predicting. The current trend for working from home and the continual increases in the cost of living has kept the demand for plots high and the preference is for smaller plots means that there are very few of the old 10 pole plots left. Although a few people left because of health or job commitments most plot-holders renewed quickly.

With a strong committee and the waiting list currently 123 which includes 55 eagerly waiting to go onto the Orchard Green site we feel confident that the association will continue to expand and thrive well into the future,

Back Hill

The new tenant has settled in well and both plots are being well tended. The site has recently had problems with rats coming from a house which has been vacant for decades. This has been reported to the authorities and steps are being taken to remedy it.

Back Hill has 2 plot holders

Canterbury Avenue

This site has seen changes in tenants this year and continues to be fully occupied.

The general maintenance/upkeep on the site is undertaken by the tenants.

Canterbury Avenue has 10 plot holders and 8 waiting.

New Barns.

The largest and most popular site in town. Thanks to excellent work by a very enthusiastic team of site reps the site is always well maintained. Regular collections of manure and mushroom compost are very well received and keeps the soil in good condition.

New Barns has 64 plot holders and 27 waiting.

Bridge Fen. Have been busy creating a community orchard on a piece of land at the front of the site with plot holders adopting specific trees and caring for them and a small area around them. We are also organising working parties to create a picnic area and are setting up a wildlife area to encourage insects to improve pollination.

Sadly, Bridge Fen has had two episodes of antisocial behaviour which has resulted in repeated vandalism to several sheds. Fortunately, nothing much was stolen apart from 7 pumpkins just before Halloween as the plot holders are urged not to leave anything of value on site and none of the affected plot-holders have decided to leave.

Bridge Fen has recently hired a contractor to clear some very badly overgrown plots, had a ten-pole plot given up because of ill health divided but not relet yet and so it still has some vacant plots though they are likely to be reallocated by the time this meeting takes place. Bridge Fen currently has 127 tenants, 6 vacant plots and 4 people waiting because of health, pregnancy and job commitments.

Upherds Lane. With its thriving community also had its share of antisocial behaviour with the theft of tools from the community shed and sadly the loss of the beloved lightweight pink wheelbarrow. The tools were replaced by New Barns and the Association paid for a replacement wheelbarrow as it is a boon for those unable to transport anything heavy. Thanks to kind intervention from the Council the repair of an overhanging fence and the end of unwelcome visits from a neighbouring dog seems to be in sight. Upherds Lane currently has 53 tenants and 25 waiting

Trading Stores.

The Stores are a welcome place where leisure gardeners and allotment holders can find a myriad of useful items and a chance to exchange ideas and get tips and answers to many gardening problems as well as copies of the NAS magazine.

The Stores are open on a Saturday morning 10.00 - 12.00 and run by a group of volunteers on a rota system.

We thank these members very much for giving up their time and will give a warm welcome to any new people who feel that they would like to join the team.

Treasurer's Report.

It should be noted that although the Allotment Year runs from 1st October - 30th September our Accounting Year runs from 1st January - 31st December.

The accounts show that we have been able to maintain our bank balance despite increase of several costs especially in the water bills due to the exceptionally hot summer. We are very grateful to the council for paying for the removal of asbestos from Bridge Fen.

Website and Gmail

The Association continues to use the Google Workspace software suite for emails, data storage and online video conferencing. The website is hosted by Weebly. No changes have been made to the provision of these services. Several committee meetings have been held on line during the year using the Meet video conferencing facility...

The Association email system is used by site reps and officers for communications with members, all bulk mailings are personalised using a mail merge add-on. This is intended to overcome possible misidentification as spam by the recipient mail servers. Mail merge is also used for notification of annual plot rents and in support of the store's activities, particularly seed potato invoicing.

The website is our communication with non-members (i.e., a shop window to the outside world) and also provides the channel for submission of applications for plots. This is one of the busiest pages.

We do not at present have an official presence on social media.

Mr K Brown - Chairman

Working Groups

Governance Working Group

The Governance Working Group met on 5 September 2023 to discuss the way forward, having regard to how the previous 4 years had panned out, and how this new quadrennial was taking shape.

Following clerical advice it was agreed that the use of substitute councillors for various committees had not worked and should cease with immediate effect. Cllr Phillips, as council chairman, offered to become ex-officio member on all committees. This was gratefully received and approved but this measure is not intended to bind future council chairmen and may have to be revisited.

Cllr Richard Morgan
Chairman - Governance Working Group

Communications and PR Working Group.

Since the election in May 2023, the Group has comprised of a completely new team and aims to review all policies and procedures so that the Council can communicate as effectively and quickly as possible with its residents. Initially this will be via Elyi and the Council's Facebook page, but the Council will expand this to other forms of communication so that we can reach as many residents as possible.

During the year the Communications and PR Working Group reviewed the City of Ely Council's social media policy. Social Media is a fast moving environment and we made amendments to ensure that it meets the current needs of both the Council and residents. In future the Council will have a small, dedicated group of staff and Councillors who will use social media, initially Facebook, but expanding to other social media platforms, to engage with residents as quickly as possible.

The Working Group manages the content for Elyi magazine, providing information about the Council, its Councillors and the services the Council provides.

Cllr Dian Warman
Chairman - Communications & PR Working Group

Inclusivity Working Group

The Inclusivity Working Group has met regularly throughout the year and continues to promote inclusivity as a central tenet in the City of Ely Council.

This group has continued dialogue with various groups in the City, such as the Ely Pride group and local faith communities, both Christian and non-Christian. In 2023, we were pleased to fly the Pan African flag for Black History month for the first time, by suggestion of the working group. We also signed up the Council to the Civility and Respect Pledge and the White Ribbon Campaign.

The working group actively encourages engagement from groups within the city on the topic of inclusivity and how we as a Council can ensure a more inclusive Ely.

Cllr Caoimhe Ní Dhónaill
Member of the Inclusivity Working Group

CCTV Working Group

Following completion of the required procurement process and appointment of a contractor, the Council is moving forward with the expansion and upgrade of its CCTV system as follows:

- a) The replacement of all the older cameras with new digital cameras. This will be funded from the City of Ely Council's CIL fund.
- b) CCTV systems will be extended to cover a wider area, eg reaching the station, down to the riverside, the Hive etc. New sites have been identified by the police and our other partners. These are being funded through a successful bid to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's Market Town Strategy

Safer streets is a priority for us, the East Cambridgeshire's Community Safety Partnership and that of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Police and Crime Commissioner.

We appreciate that these initiatives will require more capacity in order to run an efficient and effective CCTV service for the City contributing to our residents feeling safer on the streets. We will be undertaking a recruitment campaign for new volunteers. These volunteers will be fully trained at no cost to themselves providing them with a transferable security qualification.

CCTV Working Group

Strategic Plan Working Group

The Working Group consists of volunteers from across the other committees within the Council and Clerk.

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

As stated last year, the plan requires significant overhaul to reflect the impacts of the Pandemic, the recovery to a post pandemic scenario and to lay out clear strategic direction of the Council.

The plan is needed to guide the development of future budgets 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 and with the additional responsibilities 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.

It has proved challenging to arrange meetings and agree updates to the plan and the review has stalled. The participation, remit and ways of working for this group need reviewing by PF&G to ensure progress can be made on the plan this year.

Cllr Laura Fox
Member of Strategic Plan Working Group

North Ely Hub and Community Working Group

The Working Group has not met since 13 September 2022 because nothing has really happened since the Truss/Kwarteng Mini Budget delivered on 23 September 2022.

Since that date two builders have pulled out of developing Phase V Orchard Green: Bellway Homes in October 2022; followed by Crest Nicholson in October 2023.

The chairman has consulted several times with Cheffins, the agents for Endurance Estates, for an update because of parishioners concerns with regard to the proposed Co-Operative Stores, Café/Bar, and retirement home.

On 23 January 2024 Cheffins assured the chairman that a third prospective builder has signalled an interest but none of the above ancillary amenities will be forthcoming until this new prospective builder has signed the purchase papers and begun to excavate for foundations.

We await further news!

Cllr Richard Morgan
Chairman, North Ely Hub & Community Working Group

Representatives on outside organisations

Ely Trinity Dole

The merger of two of Ely's charities, the Ely Trinity Dole and Needham's Charity, is almost complete and the new Trinity Needham's Charity will shortly take over the role of both. The new body will continue to work in the areas of education and social need. The City of Ely Council will be represented on the board of the new charity by two councillors, namely Cllr Phillips and Cllr Denness.

The Ely Trinity Dole has continued throughout 2023-24 during the merger process to distribute small grants to applicants approved by the Trustees.

Cllr C. J. Phillips
City of Ely Council representative

Stuntney Village Council

Stuntney lies in the Cathedral Ward of the City of Ely, and as Ward Councillor, I have attended the bi-monthly meetings of the Village Council. The village is lively, their council an inclusive and hard working committee. The opening of Ben's Yard on the Stuntney Estate has been a major development and attracts much custom from a wide area.

The City Council, as part of its LHI bids, included an application to reduce the A142 speed limit from Ben's Yard to Barway to 50mph. We await the decision of the County Council on that application. Together with the village council, we are looking into including Ben's Yard in the regular bus service between Ely and Newmarket.

The Social Club in the village, a hub of community, has now become independent as the Village Hall and several in the village are seeking funds to make significant repairs to the building. It now has a licence too.

Future plans include continuing lobbying for a dedicated, pedestrian, cycle and equestrian path to Stuntney from Ely, and we hope to go beyond the village to Soham too.

Cllr Mike Banyard
City of Ely Council representative

Prickwillow Village Council Report

This council has met about 4 times during the past 12 months in the village hall under the leadership of Sophie Deltour and Chantal Epp.

A mobile library visits Prickwillow every 4th Tuesday of the month. It parks in the lay-by alongside the red phone box at 12.35 -12.55pm – the parking place is likely to change in the near future.

On 8 May we gathered to admire the Prickwillow Tree Canopy near Bunkers Hill and afterwards at a Picnic in the Park in the village hall. As Mayor & Mayoress of Ely Jane and I were pleased to see so many villagers including 92-year-old retired farmer Stanley Rice. The newly restored War Memorial continues to be admired and cared for and this year, with funding from the City Council, a new peripatetic access designed for wheelchair access, was installed and approved.

Another successful quiz was held on Friday 8th December at Hiam Sports & Social Club which raised funds.

Cary Outis, once again, delighted residents with his dressing up of the phone box as a letter box: “Letters addressed to Santa Claus asking for world peace!”

The former Baptist Chapel has been sold. A planning application to turn it into residential use has been approved by the district council although the new owners have reneged on the agreement and are now seeking redress from the Secretary of State.

Our school children who hope to catch the school bus into Ely from Isleham are currently without shelter but we are hoping to provide a new bus shelter near the entrance of Kingdon Avenue. So far, the Highways Authority have agreed to cut back the brambles to provide a space for a Perspex Bus Shelter but the necessary planning applications will have to take place to make this a reality but we are hopeful.

Cllr Richard Morgan - City of Ely Council Representative

Ely Museum

This year, Ely Museum held two exhibitions: a family friendly display of extinct marine reptile fossils and a community exhibition celebrating the last 50 years of Ely (working with their Young Curators). They completed our Art Fund funded community engagement project and successfully gained funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a project to explore and develop the Museum collections, whilst improving their marketing and diversifying their events. Thanks to the hard work of the team at Ely Museum, school visits have increased to the highest levels since the pandemic and events continue to be popular, particularly their series of evening talks.

However, rising costs and pressure on visitors’ spending mean that Ely Museum is still facing challenges despite all of the above success. The museum is facing a loss at the end of this financial year and with this in mind, they are very grateful to the City of Ely Council for increasing the grant they will receive for next year.

Pip Garnder (former councillor representative)

Cawdle Fen Internal Drainage Board

Cawdle IDB received a presentation from a member of staff on resetting of farmland to lock in carbon. The Board is working with DEFRA and farmers on this initiative in a joined up way.

A sub group was set up to manage the damaged culvert beneath station land. This group will continue to work on this project next year.

Cllr Rebecca Denness
City of Ely Council representative

FINANCIAL SITUATION 2023-2024

The City of Ely Council's financial situation during 2023/24 has following on from the last financial year been encouraging again. Both the Maltings and Oliver Cromwell's House have seen an increase in the number of bookings and visitors. This has resulted in the income being much higher than was expected. Expenditure continues to be of a concern, due to the increasing costs on energy, supplies and services.

The Council is hopeful that the budgeted shortfall for this year will be less than predicted, but the rise in expenditure to enable the council to provide its services, at the normal high standards, proves a challenging situation.

The Council's annual return will be prepared shortly for this financial year. It will also be published for parishioners to view on the Council's website.

Tracey Coulson
The Clerk to the Council