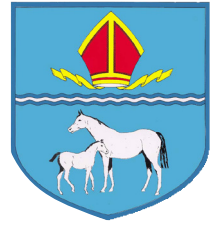


# East Cambridgeshire District Council



End of Year  
Council Report  
2016/2017

# Foreword

As residents of East Cambridgeshire you will have noticed a great deal of positive changes from this time last year. It's hard not to notice all of the new infrastructure which is being developed around East Cambridgeshire, including the new cinema site and restaurants, and the new Community Land Trust developments (which are both addressed in more detail later within the report). It is clear that over the forthcoming 12 months the landscape will change yet again for our residents of East Cambs with even more choice in recreational activities, housing and transportation networks.

We are pleased to say that the previous Council end of year report was delivered to over 36,000 homes across our District. Members have again committed to doing the same, highlighting some key achievements and developments which continue to make East Cambridgeshire a fantastic place to work, live, visit and invest in.

In May, James Palmer was elected as Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The Combined Authority area will benefit from a £20m annual fund over the next 30 years (equalling over £600m) which will support infrastructure, economic growth and job development, plus £170m for affordable housing and transport infrastructure improvements such as upgrades to the A10.

The Council is continuing to focus on the priorities within the Corporate Plan and we are proud to say that we have achieved a balanced budget in 2017/2018 and will continue to do so again in 2018/2019. Our innovative solutions to bringing in additional revenue streams and long term financial planning have put the Council in a strong position moving forward.

In addition, the East Cambs Trading Company Ltd has grown over the last 12 months. At a time when many councils face serious financial difficulties, the trading company has been an enabling factor to help develop new infrastructure projects including the Barton Road housing development site in Ely, where profits from the sale of the houses will be put directly back into the Council.

The Council is proud of its partnership working with local Community Land Trusts (CLT's) around the District. Since our last end of year Council report there have been an additional 5 CLTs formed by local residents. This is a clear example of how local residents are driving forward infrastructure to meet the long term needs of their communities.

You may have recently heard that the Council has agreed to deliver waste services itself from April 2018. It will be both an exciting and challenging process, but the decision will enable the Council to save money and make clear efficiencies. We will keep you updated on progress and make sure that the changes go smoothly for you, our customers.

We hope that the following report gives you an insight into what has been achieved in 2016/2017 across the District. We are proud of what has been achieved in such a short amount of time.



*Charles Roberts - Leader of the Council*

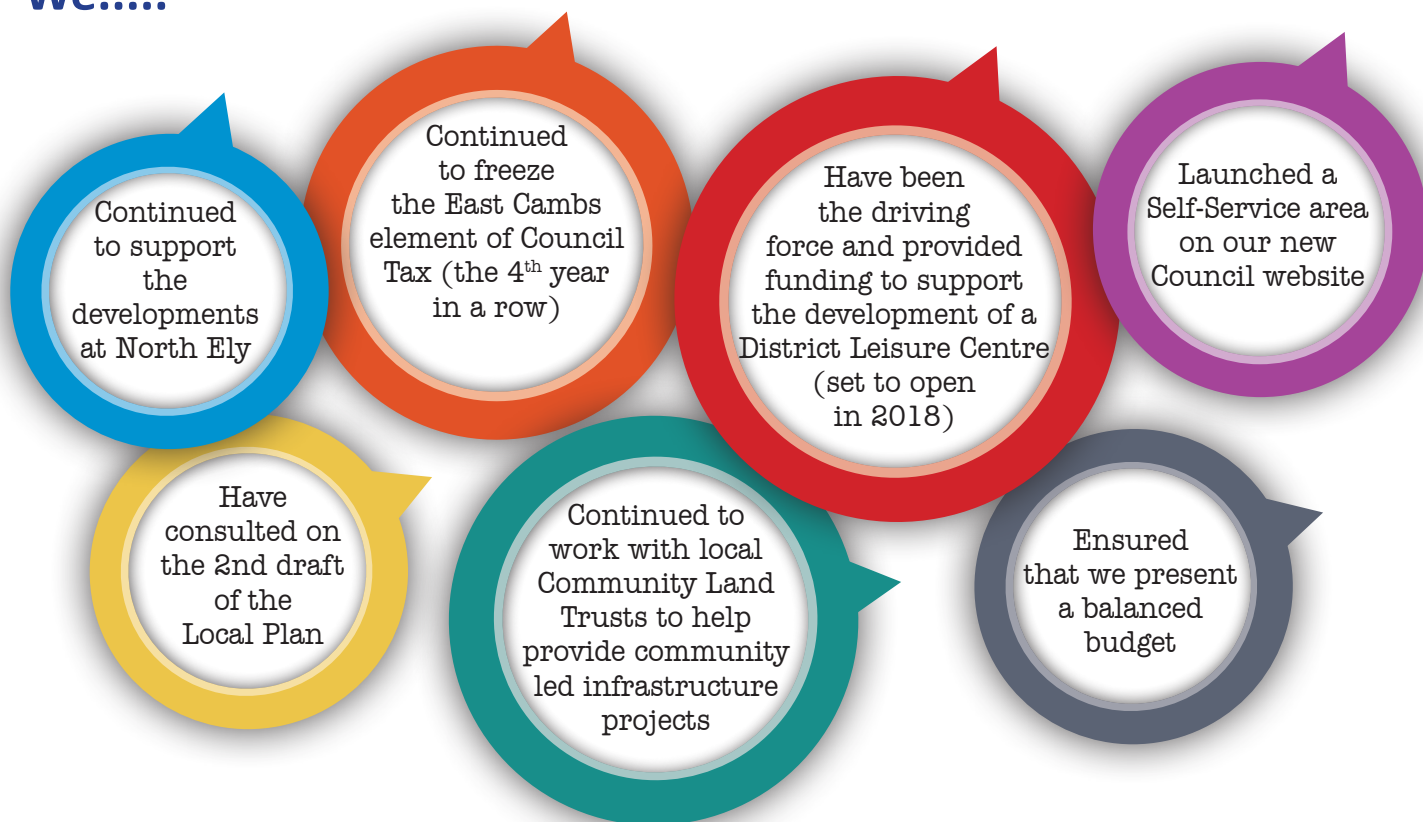


*John Hill - Chief Executive*

# 2016/2017 in review:

## A snapshot of our achievements

We.....



## What have we achieved against our Corporate Plan Priorities?

The Corporate Plan sets out key priorities which the Council will achieve by March 2019. Whilst we have achieved so much in a short time (from 2015) we still have a number of significant projects to complete over the next 2 years, and we are actively working with key partner organisations and our local communities to ensure these deliver on time.

The following information highlights our achievements over the past 12 months against the priorities and includes some projects we have worked on which you may not be so familiar with.

### Making services even more efficient

The Council ran a series of consultation sessions to find out what you would like to see featured on our new Council website. The feedback included easier navigation, an updated design and better processes for you to submit online forms instead of coming into our offices or phoning us.

We have developed over 200 brand new online self-service forms and have produced interactive maps on which you can report issues such as dog fouling, abandoned vehicles and fly tipping, and you can pay for services online such as planning pre-apps, parking tickets and mooring charges. You can access these on our Click and Connect pages on the Council's website.



## Being commercially and financially focused

The East Cambridgeshire Trading Company Ltd continues to help facilitate a number of exciting local projects through its development arm, Palace Green Homes. This includes the Barton Road housing development site in Ely. The contractors have started on site and the 11 new homes (6 houses and 5 apartments) will be completed during Spring 2018.

These high quality homes will be situated within a conservation area and the Council has been careful to ensure that the impact on the existing car park is kept to a minimum.

Palace Green Homes has also helped Soham Community Land Trust (CLT) to obtain planning permission for 13 new homes, 8 of which are to be retained by the CLT as affordable homes for local people. The project is likely to start on site in Summer 2017.



*Artists impression - Barton Road development, Ely*

You may have also seen that Ely Markets have gone through somewhat of a transformation over the past year. A new logo, website and themed markets have continued to secure their place at the heart of the community.



“Ely Markets” is now part of our trading company and for those not familiar with the markets we are incredibly proud to say that they have been going strong for many hundreds of years!

There are currently 3 markets a week which includes the traditional “Charter” market every Thursday and popular Craft and Farmers’ Markets on Saturdays, and we have also introduced a number of seasonal events including our “Festive Lates” markets in the run-up to Christmas.

Last year as a direct result of customer feedback, a very successful vegan market was staged. The event was so successful that we have organised another Vegan Fair to take place in September 2017 and an off shoot of it entitled the “Vegan & Vintage Fair” took place in May (we hope to make this a regular calendar event too).

## Transforming our services

The Council’s Transformation Programme has successfully completed Phase 1. This has included the launch of the Council’s new website and the Visit Ely website.

The new Council website was developed in direct response to customer feedback which highlighted the need for quicker access to Council information, self-service forms (as previously mentioned) and a more modern design which is accessible by mobile devices.

The new site has clear icons which enable our customers to have quick access to the most searched for topics including council tax, waste and recycling collection dates.

The new Visit Ely website (<http://www.visitely.org.uk>) has been launched to showcase all of the events happening locally. The site enables our customers to search for specific dates and has a helpful journey planner. Customers are able to book and pay for Council managed events online and search for appropriate accommodation and places to eat.

The Transformation Programme also focuses on projects which improve and streamline internal processes. In Phase 1 this has included changing our internal telephony systems, improving ICT processes and looking at how we can utilise new technology to streamline how we carry out work.





## Open for Business

The Council has approved the decision to bring our waste services back in house. Due to the existing contract coming up for renewal we saw this as a positive opportunity.



### Did You Know?

From April 2018 we will terminate our existing waste contract with an external provider and take control of the street cleansing and household waste collections. These will be delivered through the Council.



Between now and April 2018 the Council will be working tirelessly to ensure that you, our customers, see no real changes throughout the changeover period. You will however see efficiencies and improvements to the service.

Although it is difficult to assess the total savings the Council will make, we will be initially saving £250,000 from not having to undertake the EU procurement process.



### Did You Know?

Over the past 12 months the Council has looked at ways in which we can better support local businesses whilst ensuring that we continue to offer cost effective solutions.

Our Building Control Service can provide building regulations advice and guarantee to visit customers the same day if they phone before 10am.

Our Planning Service can offer pre-application advice to ensure that anyone submitting a planning application gets as much support and technical advice as they need to help ease them through the process.

Our rates for both services are competitive. For more information please contact our Customer Services team who will be happy to advise you of our charges.

## Improving leisure and recreational opportunities

### What an exciting time for East Cambridgeshire!

The new Ely Leisure Village will help to enhance recreational activities. The Cineworld six-screen cinema and new restaurants will enable people to have more choice. The cinema has opened its doors and we look forward to inviting more visitors to the area.



*The Cineworld cinema*

The contractors for the District leisure centre, Pellikaan, have started on site. The development of the leisure centre is expected to take approximately 12 months and open in Spring 2018. The leisure centre will include an 8 lane 25m pool, a 120 station gym, two activity studios, a four-court sports hall and an artificial pitch.

The project is being funded by the Council and includes a grant of £1.5m from Sport England. It will be managed by Greenwich Leisure Limited on behalf of East Cambridgeshire District Council.



*District Leisure Centre - Artists' impression.*



The Council's mooring scheme has now been embedded for over a year. The original aim of the scheme was to encourage more boaters to visit Ely and ensure that moorings are available when boaters arrive.

In a survey carried out prior to the launch of the mooring scheme, boaters suggested that they were occasionally unable to visit Ely as the moorings were frequently full – particularly during the boating season. The new scheme allows boaters to moor free for 48 hours; however they will incur a charge of £100 per 24 hour stay after the free period.

The scheme has proved effective and ensures that more boats can moor up along the river and enjoy the attractions which Ely has to offer.

Another key tourist attraction for the area, Oliver Cromwell's House, has been named a "hidden gem" by Visit England. The award recognises the country's smaller visitor attractions, which although small in size are large in visitor experience. It is the second time that the site has won this award and we are incredibly grateful to our visitors for putting us forward. We hope that with the new Escape Rooms experience and the updated gift shop area, Oliver Cromwell's house will attract even more customers.

## Affordable housing

The developer Hopkins Homes has submitted a Reserved Matters application for Phase 1 of the site in North Ely. Phase 1 will include 20 affordable units and 199 homes in total, plus footpaths and cycle ways and public open space. The outline application which was approved for the site secures the principle of development, whereas the Reserved Matters application gives planners more detail and includes information on landscaping, access, appearance, layout and scale for that part of the site.

In the previous Council report we highlighted the importance of continuing to support local communities to develop Community Land Trusts (CLT).



*The Stretham & Wilburton CLT homes*

For those not yet familiar with a CLT, it is a non-profit making organisation, led by local community need and driven forward by local residents who volunteer their time.

Initiatives within a CLT can include homes (a percentage of which are affordable), business development sites, doctors surgeries, shops etc.

East Cambridgeshire District Council has been offering on-going support to such projects as they are helping to provide essential infrastructure in the District.

There are now a total of 8 Community Land Trusts across East Cambridgeshire, with the development at Swaffham Prior now completed.

The Stretham and Wilburton CLT has completed Phase 1 of their build with 5 houses being built (2 of which are already occupied). In total 75 houses will be built, 23 of them being affordable.

The CLT in Haddenham has now identified a preferred site and is working up designs for the new development in conjunction with Palace Green Homes. CLTs in Witchford, Swaffham Bulbeck and Fordham are currently undertaking scoping exercises for possible land sites and development opportunities. A second CLT in Soham (known as SAVE CLT) is currently in the process of being set up and will focus its work on improving community facilities in the area.

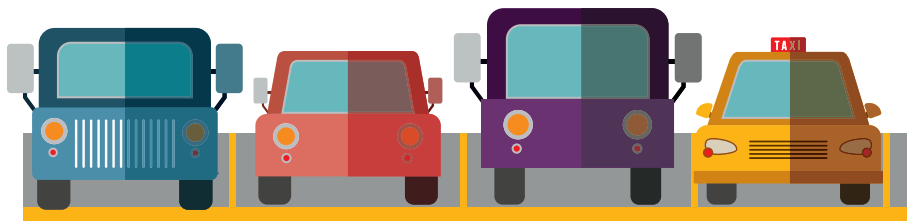
The last 12 months has shown exactly what communities can achieve with commitment, dedication and effective planning. We look forward to reporting on their ongoing achievements.

## Economic development

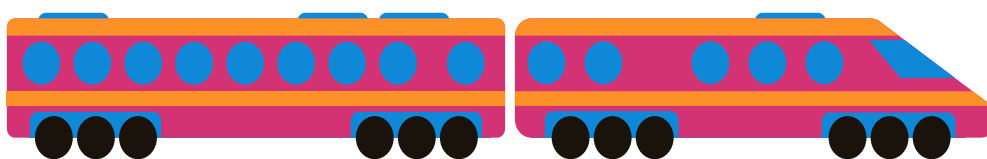
The Council published the second draft of the Local Plan in January 2017 for consultation. The Local Plan is a statutory requirement which all councils must produce and sets out the strategy for future growth across an area.

To ensure that the process has been open and transparent, East Cambridgeshire District Council has worked in close partnership with the community, local town and parish councils through the development stages of the plan and has taken a proactive approach throughout this process. A third and final draft of the Local Plan will be presented to Council by October 2017. Further public consultation will then follow, with the submission of the final document to the Secretary of State by Spring 2018 so that an independent Inspector can check it is an appropriate Local Plan for the District.

The Southern Bypass in Ely is now under construction. It is expected that the opening date will be Spring 2018. The £36m project will provide two new bridges over the river and the railway line and consist of a 1.7km road.



We are pleased to say that the Council priority to extend commuter car parking spaces at Ely and Littleport Station is well advanced. Sites have been acquired and planning approved for both schemes. These will provide an additional 128 spaces in Ely and 74 parking spaces at Littleport Station with 16 cycle spaces. East Cambs Trading Company will manage the construction of the new car parks, and both are expected to be open for use by commuters later this year.



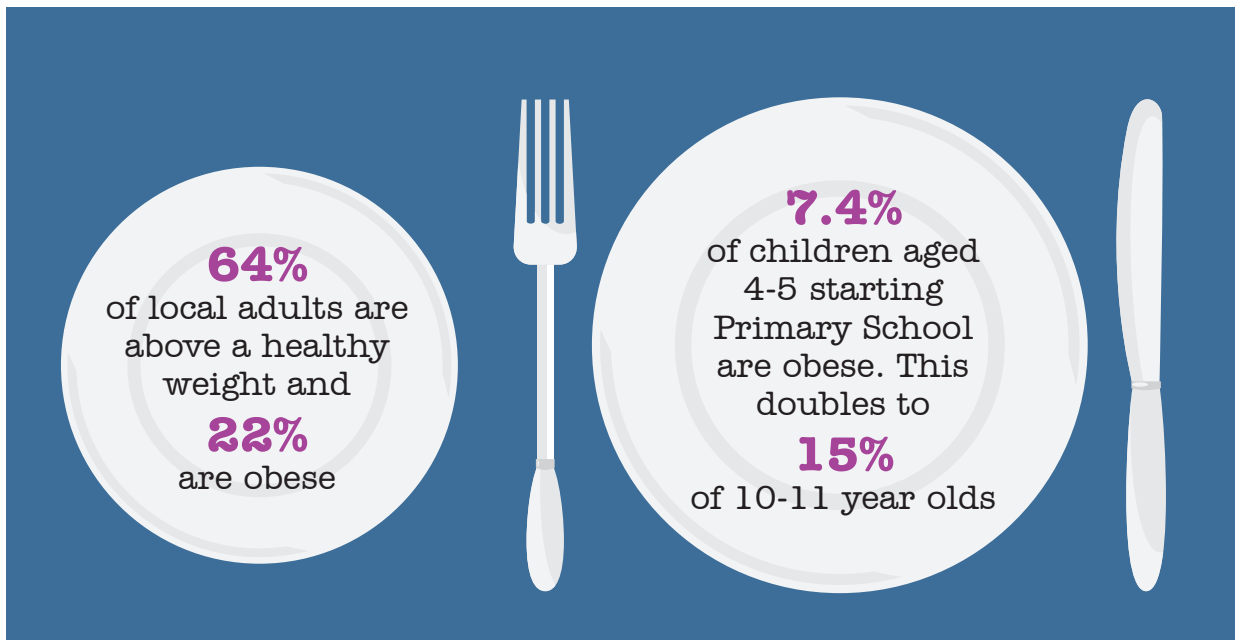
The Soham Station development project is nearing completion of the third stage of the feasibility study. The Council has been continuing to work with Network Rail, Cambridgeshire County Council and the Department for Transport to help progress the project further. A bid of £8m to Central Government to help pay for a proportion of the capital costs has been submitted and the decision will be made during the summer.

The Council has been continuing to work with local businesses and schools to help with routes to employment. The apprenticeship scheme has helped to place a further 2 young people with local businesses which will give them the skills to progress more easily into full time employment. We are keen to carry on with this partnership working with local enterprises to help secure improved futures for young people across the District.



# Helping our communities

**To be healthier;** In Cambridgeshire:



Everyone loves a treat once in a while and there's nothing better than sitting in a park or by the river eating chips, or a lovely burger. But what if you could get healthier choices from your favourite take away, pub or restaurant? We think you'd agree that you wouldn't feel guilty visiting them more often!

This is exactly why East Cambridgeshire District Council has been working with local take away providers, public houses and restaurants on a pilot scheme to look at providing healthier food options for their customers.

The scheme was originally started in Littleport and now includes Ely. Councils across Cambridgeshire have been working together with small and medium sized food businesses to make small menu changes to help with long term health benefits.

Initial feedback has been very positive with businesses and customers commenting that they have liked the fresher food on the menus and have more of a choice of healthier options.

If you run a local food business and would like to find out more information then please visit <http://www.healthier-options.org.uk/about/>

## To be safe and live in warm, affordable and quality accommodation

Homelessness can affect anyone from any walk of life, at any time.

East Cambridgeshire District Council has been helping to tackle homelessness and support local people with early intervention work. When the current team started to look at ways to tackle the crisis in 2013 there were families on the waiting list to be housed, the local hostels were full and people were being housed in bed and breakfast accommodation (at a cost of £750,000 per year).





Since then the Council's Homeless Strategy has helped to ensure that by working with people in crisis at the earliest opportunity it has prevented so many families from becoming homeless. We are pleased to say that the Council has reduced the cost of accommodation to zero whilst still ensuring a high quality service.

The Council has been hosting the National Practitioner Support Service for all local authorities across the UK (a no mean feat considering the size of our Council against the large authorities we are partnering with).

We have been working towards achieving the national standard in tackling homelessness. The Gold Standard award from the Department of Communities and Local Government is a local authority led peer review scheme which helps councils to deliver more efficient approaches from homeless prevention services. East Cambridgeshire District Council has started the 10 step improvement approach and recently passed the peer review process and the Bronze Standard. We will keep you updated on our progress in the next Council end of year report.



*The Community Hub - photo by Martyn Jolley*

To help stop domestic abuse against women we have signed up to support the national White Ribbon Campaign.

Domestic abuse is a real problem across the UK with 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men experiencing domestic violence at some point in their lives and the White Ribbon Campaign encourages men to condemn abuse against women. Men can show their support by either wearing a white ribbon, or by becoming a White Ribbon Ambassador.



The Council will be looking to recruit ambassadors across East Cambridgeshire to raise awareness of the campaign within local communities.

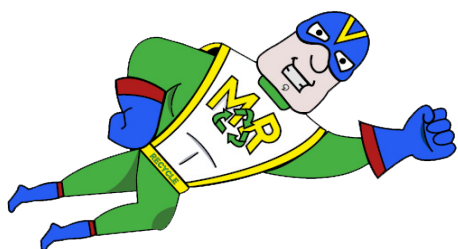
Another community focused project which the Council has been working with partners on has been recently launched. The "Community Hub" has enabled the Council to build upon its relationships with local agencies including the Citizens Advice Service, Red 2 Green, Inclusion and the Cambridgeshire

Housing Society, to provide information on managing debt, drug and alcohol dependency issues, mental health support and housing information. The sessions take place once a week at The Lighthouse Centre in Ely. They are free and anyone can drop in. For more information please visit our website.

## To be greener

Recently released recycling statistics by DEFRA in December showed that for the second year running East Cambridgeshire was 26th best English council for recycling out of 319 councils responsible for waste collections. The Council is committed to achieving its 60% recycling target, which would take it into the top 10 performers.





Everyone can be involved in helping to recycle and over the last 12 months we have been working with local schools to encourage children to play an active role. We have enlisted the help of the superhero “Michael Recycle” to fly into schools (well not literally fly, it’s just as easy to come by car these days) and highlight to children the benefits of recycling and what items can be recycled.

Our new recycling superhero was designed by Brooke Smith from Littleport as part of a bigger campaign to engage primary school children. “Michael Recycle” has already been in to a number of schools to deliver his message. If you see him around the District feel free to shake his hand, take a selfie or tweet him at **#@MikeLRecycle**.

## Improving our environment

If you are a regular visitor to Ely Country Park you may well have seen some changes. We have received the Green Flag award again this year and we have continued to look at what is important to its users.

We have improved access around the park which now includes a resting point, re-grading of the slope, more stable surfaces and a new handrail. All of the changes have been carried out in partnership with the Ely Access Group One Community.

A new improvement plan has been agreed by Committee. The Ely Country Park Improvement Plan 2017-2020 will see further changes over the forthcoming years including installing new climbing equipment for 6-12 year olds, new equipment for toddlers, better shade provision, more seating and an extension to the toilets on site.

To support with the Council’s commitment to improve our green spaces the Open Spaces and Facilities team has been offering services to external customers which is helping our commercial agenda. This includes services such as ROSPA checks on play areas, grass cutting and tree maintenance. If you are interested in these services please contact the Council for more information.

## To be self-sufficient

The community and voluntary sector plays a very important role within East Cambridgeshire and the Council will continue to offer support where it can.

The Council has awarded 42 Rural Services Grants to communities who have smaller growth sites and as such reduce their potential to receive funding from building developments.

An equal share of £122,000 (with each one receiving £2,904) was awarded to enable the full or partial funding of community initiatives. Projects include an extension to the school play area at Bottisham, a road safety project in Haddenham and speed watch equipment in Prickwillow.

We regularly attend community initiatives including drop-in surgeries (more recently in Littleport with other external support agencies), community events and awareness raising activities.

In 2016/2017 the Council funded 8 Community Grants Funds for projects up to the value of £1,000. We have been fortunate enough to play a part in being able to fund lots of exciting events and projects including;

- Funding towards the East Cambridgeshire Arts Festival which enabled visitors to access music, theatre and performing arts across the District, particularly the more rural areas of our District.

We also offer Facilities Improvement Grants for community groups to develop their building infrastructure and improve their facilities. This year we have awarded £35,000. Projects over the past year have included;

- Funding towards the renovation of the kitchen area at Little Thetford Village Hall which will eventually enable the group to provide sandwiches, catering and beverages to visitors using the hall for functions.

## Customer Charter

To continue our commitment to ensuring that you, our customers, are at the heart of everything we do, we have developed a new Customer Charter.

The Charter provides the framework for communicating how we will meet the expectations of our customers and ensure that our services are undertaken in an open and transparent way. We are not complacent in our standards and aim for 100% customer satisfaction; however, if we are not meeting your expectations please inform us.

# East Cambridgeshire District Council Customer Charter

East Cambridgeshire District Council is committed to ensuring that the district remains one of the best places to live in the country.

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do and we welcome your feedback on how we can improve our services.

Our Customer Charter sets out our promises to how we will deliver high quality services for you and the service standards we will provide which enable us to meet your expectations.

### Our promises

We will;

- Provide you with high quality services when *you* need them and where *you* want them,
- Ensure that we use plain language and have properly trained staff to answer your enquiries,
- Be honest, approachable and polite, keeping your needs at the heart of everything we do,
- Aim to answer your enquiry at the first point of contact,
- Make sure that information we provide is accurate and up to date,
- Deliver services in a way which offers good value for money for the community,
- Treat all our customers equally,

When you visit our offices we will provide;

- An accessible space which is open during published hours,
- A reception area which is welcoming and friendly,

- Trained staff who will aim to see you within 10 minutes (if you have to wait longer then we will explain why),

When you phone the Council, we will;

- Aim to answer your call within 30 seconds,
- Aim to answer your query at the first point of contact,

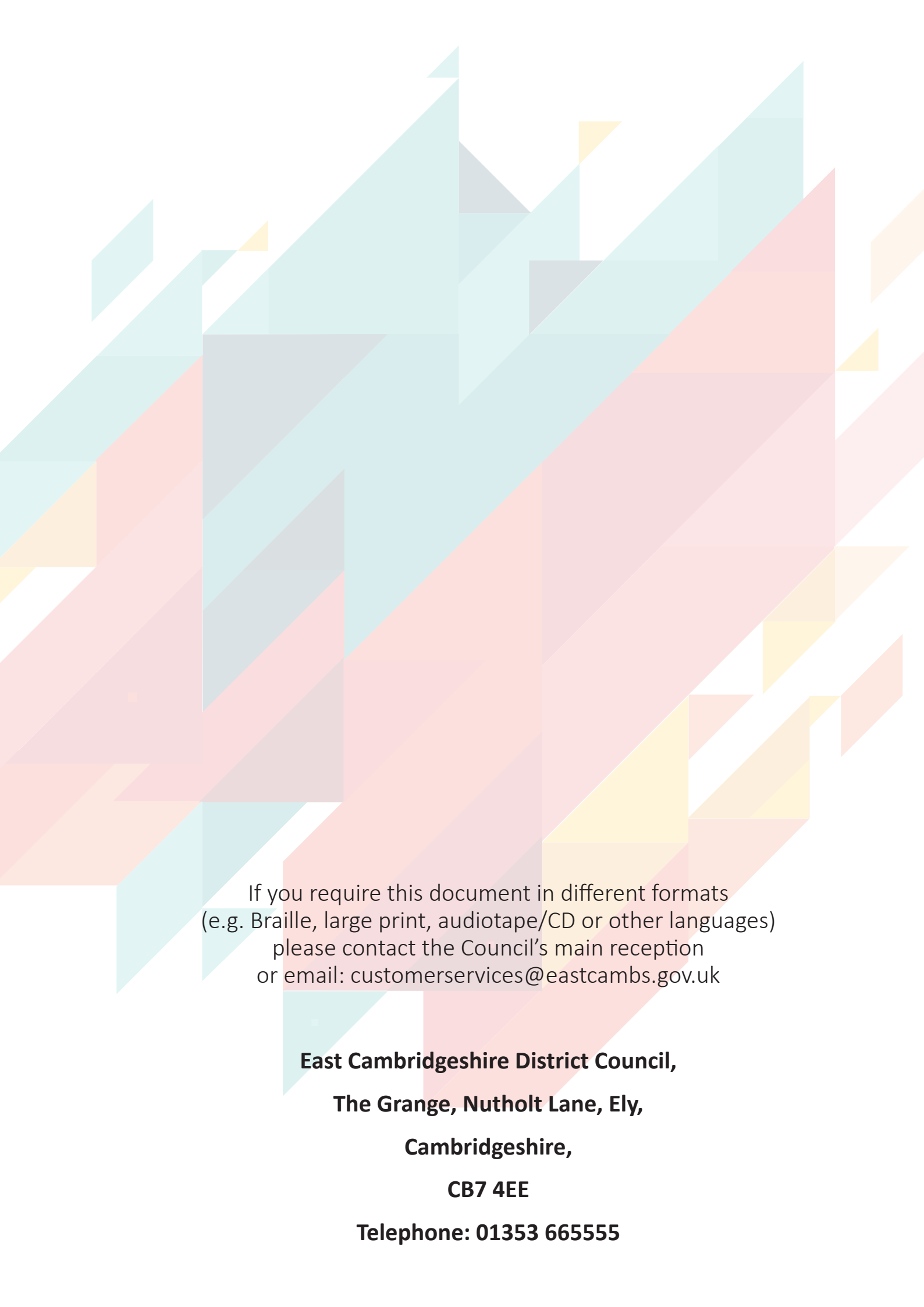
If you write or email us we will;

- Aim to respond to you within 48 hours by email and within 3 working days by letter,
- Be clear and use plain English when responding to you,

If we visit you, we will;

- Arrive at the agreed appointment time (unless we are running late and in which case we will contact you),
- Be helpful, polite, treat you with respect and dignity,





If you require this document in different formats  
(e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape/CD or other languages)  
please contact the Council's main reception  
or email: [customerservices@eastcambs.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@eastcambs.gov.uk)

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