

FINANCE & ASSETS COMMITTEE
28 March 2024
QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 6 – ECTC Business Plan

| Questioner | Question | Response |
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| Cllr Cane | Were the land sales offered on the open market? | Eden Square, Ely (Former Paradise Pool) was offered for sale on the open market. |
| Cllr Cane | Does ECTC pay S106/CIL at the same rate as other developers? | Yes. |
| Cllr Cane | How much interest would ECDC earn through market rates on the amount they expect to loan ECTC in 2024/25 and how much interest will they earn from ECTC? | The forecast average loan to ECTC in 2024/25 is £5.4 million, which at a fixed interest rate of 4.5% will earn interest of £243,000. The average interest earned on investments in February 2025 was 5.08%, assuming this rate remained throughout 2024/25, this would earn an additional £31,320 of interest, although clearly interest rates are forecast to reduce during the coming twelve months. |
| Cllr Cane | What is the surplus for ECDC on charges for Support Services and Member Services provided to ECTC? | As the Council did not have to employ additional resources to provide the support and member services to ECTC the whole amount of £838,003 is surplus. |
| Cllr Cane | What is the surplus for ECDC on the accommodation costs charged to ECTC? | The whole amount of £445,174 is surplus. |
| Cllr Cane | What proportion of income from other organisations comes from Parish Councils, Schools and Charities? | As set out in the Business Plan 29% of ECTC income from the Grounds Maintenance Service is from other organisations. The apportionment for 'other' is as follows: Parish Councils 9.5% Schools 73.5% Charity 0.5% Other individual contracts 16.5% |
| Cllr Cane | Why is PGH forecast to make a Gross Loss in 2023/24? | As the number of houses sold in 2023/24 will only number 10, the profit from these is insufficient to cover all the costs. In future years where there is a larger pipeline of property sales, profit is recorded. |

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| Cllr Cane | Why does the housing sales contribution vary between years from 6% in 2023/24 to 26% in 2026/27? | Where staff are working directly on specific projects, their costs capitalised against the project cost and the costs released into the P&L at the appropriate time (usually on the sale of each property) and is then included within the housing construction costs. The value of this capitalised figure reduced in 23/24 as the level of staff directly involved in projects reduced. |
| Cllr Cane | Why have salaries increased by 27% in 2023/24? | Where staff are working directly on specific projects, their costs capitalised against the project cost and the costs released into the P&L at the appropriate time (usually on the sale of each property) and is then included within the housing construction costs. The value of this capitalised figure reduced in 23/24 as the level of staff directly involved in projects reduced. |
| Cllr Cane | Why are salaries expected to decrease by 2% in 2025/26? | The opposite of the above, increased direct work on projects leads to a slight increase in the value of capitalised costs. |
| Cllr Holtzmann | Why have the roads and open spaces in Haddenham CLT not been transferred to the Parish Council? | The Open Spaces have been transferred to the Parish Council. The roads are being retained by ECTC as they are not being adopted by the Local Highway Authority. |
| Cllr Holtzmann | What is the overall percentage of affordable homes in all three Arbor Square Phases together? | Phase 1- no affordable housing was required, however, 15 units were provided as Shared Ownership. This represents 16% of Phase 1. Negotiations are in the final stages for Phase 2. Once these negotiations are complete ECTC will be able to confirm the level of affordable housing being delivered on Phase 2. ECTC can confirm that at least 33% of Phase 2 will be delivered as affordable housing. Phase 3 remains subject to planning permission. |
| Cllr Holtzmann | Has ECTC delivered any houses with rooftop solar panels similar to new developments in Cambridge? | None of the houses delivered by ECTC to date have rooftop solar panels. This is being explored for Arbour Square Phase 2. |
| Cllr Trapp | The table on page 8 of the ECTC business plan gives a false impression: e.g. the Senior Management Cost Recovery is to pay for the use of ECDC staff of which there would be fewer, and cost less, if they did not | As the Council did not have to employ additional resources to provide the support and member services to ECTC the whole amount identified is a benefit to the Council. It is a matter for the Council to determine whether it would have sold land for development to other developers. |

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| | have to work for ECTC as well, the CIL/S106 payments would be paid by commercial developers had they built this housing – nothing special. | |
| Cllr Trapp | Page 29: Who will be administering the £100k houses, and under what terms? | The Council will allocate the homes in accordance with the Council’s £100k Homes Allocations Policy. ECTC will then process the sales for the successful applicants. |

Agenda Item 7 - End of Year Reports 2023/24 and Service Delivery Plans 2024/25

| Questioner | Question | Response |
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| Cllr Holtzmann | Why is there no professional development for Finance and HR? | Professional development forms part of an individual’s training and development plan which is separate to the service plan process. |
| Cllr Holtzmann | Why is professional development just “as needed” in Legal? | The Director Legal is a solicitor by profession and the SRA CPD year ends on 31 st October. The Senior Legal Assistant is a FCILEX and the CILEX CPD year ends on 30 th September. All other training is as needed for other staff in the legal team, as training sessions/courses will come up during the year. |
| Cllr Holtzmann | Why is there no professional development planned for the Open Spaces team, given the increased importance of biodiversity? | Professional development forms part of an individual’s training and development plan which is separate to the service plan process. The Open Space Team works with other departments and external partners on the biodiversity requirements. Where identified and necessary training is provided. |
| Democratic Services | | |
| Cllr Cane | What lessons were learnt from the end of year Performance report for this service? | Two key learning points were: That the Team can reduce its significant level of paper usage via electronic solutions. That there was less ‘churn’ (movers within the District) than we believed – see response below. |

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| Cllr Cane | Why were there less than 10,000 new registrations against a target of 12,000? | Route 2 and Managed Webs, are people who register as moving within the District, either during the Canvass period or on an 'ad hoc' basis. We now know from 2 years of data gathering under the new arrangements that there are less of these than we anticipated each year, hence the change to the target for the forthcoming year. |
| Cllr Cane | Has the Democratic Services Manager post been advertised? | Yes, the post has been advertised with a closing date of 28 March 2024. |
| Cllr Cane | Why is the target for member seminars simply a number of seminars delivered? Where is the quality target? | We do compile qualitative information as well (numbers of Councillors attending and feedback received from councillors and trainers on the sessions) but have not been asked for this in the past. We can do this on a more formalised basis, if Members wish. |
| Cllr Cane | What are the plans for improving working between Parish Councils, County Council and CPCA? | Democratic Services have made presentations at the Parish Councils Forum organised by the Communities & Partnerships Team when there are issues relevant for Parishes. Improved working with CCC, the CPCA and GCP would be more of a corporate issue rather than merely a Democratic Services issue. |
| Cllr Cane | What are the plans for improving working with the GCP? | See above. |
| Cllr Cane | What are the 3 top risks for delivery of this service plan? | Recruitment to the Democratic Services Manager post and to the soon to be vacant DSO/trainee post as a result of the transfer of the current trainee DSO to the vacant ESO/Trainee post from 1 April 2024. |
| Cllr Cane | What improvements will residents see as a result of this service plan? | Effective implementation of changes to voter arrangements at forthcoming Elections. Continuation of responsive service for public speaking/participation schemes at committees. |
| Cllr Trapp | Democratic Services: not clear what is meant by 'Publish and maintain. . . Route 2 Forms' having a target of 85%. Would this | See above response. |

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| | disenfranchise some voters? | |
| Economic Development | | |
| Cllr Cane | What lessons were learnt from the end of year Performance report for this service? | <p>Shortening response timescales for funding/support programmes became very challenging and resulted in a need to adapt and closely manage economic developments focus.</p> <p>Linked to above, a recognition that the council needs to build a wider portfolio of ongoing project ideas/business cases that are suitable for funding and could be expedited to oven ready status.</p> |
| Cllr Cane | Why is there not a target for revitalising our town centres? | <p>Although not specifically specified in the service delivery plan, support for our local town centre businesses is part of our service offer through advice on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking • Funding opportunities • Skills • Access to planning services <p>Example Phase 3 'Ely Shop Front' grant scheme to be launched in 2024.</p> |
| Cllr Cane | What are the 3 top risks for delivery of this service plan? | <p>Capacity and effectiveness of the service impacted by staff retention/recruitment.</p> <p>Inability to complete funded projects within agreed timeframes. This could impact the drawn down of funding from Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority in a timely manner.</p> <p>Delays in the decisions and outputs of the Further Education Coldspots study, led by Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority, impacting the further development of post 16 and adult learning and skills opportunities in the district.</p> |
| Cllr Cane | What improvements will residents see as a result of this service plan? | <p>Delivery of Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund portfolio of projects will deliver a number of improvements for the districts economy. These will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of Wifi network • Digital inclusion project |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of E-Space North offering local employment opportunities in Littleport • Business growth fund supporting local businesses to grow and increase opportunities for better jobs across the district • Outcome of Further Education feasibility study developing a future strategy for post 16 and adult skills development in the district. |
| Financial Services | | |
| Cllr Cane | What lessons were learnt from the end of year Performance report for this service? | Very little, as performance had been being reviewed throughout the year and steps taken to correct any issues as they became known. |
| Cllr Cane | Why has the average time taken to collect income in relation to external invoices increased from 18.82 days to 20.07 days? | The Council has limited control over this indicator, other than ensuring that invoices are clear and the remainder schedules is adhered to. |
| Cllr Cane | Why were the draft Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 not published until the end of September 2023, rather than by the end of July 2023? | Work on the 2022/23 Accounts was delayed while the Audit of the 2021/22 was taking place. It was considered prudent, to get sign-off of these, therefore confirming the brought forward values into 2022/23 before finalising the latter year's Accounts. |
| Cllr Cane | Why no quality measure on Internal Audit, eg 100% of recommendations implemented to the agreed deadline? | The Director, Finance believes that the Service Plan picks up the key performance indicators for the service. Clearly, an endless list of indicators could be included in the Plan if desired, but the view is that the current indicators provide the correct level of focus. |
| Cllr Cane | Why no performance measure for monitoring the Trading Companies? | This is a Finance Team Service Plan |
| Cllr Cane | Why no performance measure for managing the finances, ensuring correct VAT treatment etc for the Mepal Crematorium project | See answer above |

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| Cllr Cane | Why no quality measures on the accounts, eg no significant audit adjustments? | See answer above |
| Cllr Cane | Why no quality measures on the quarterly management reports, eg Q3 report to be within x% of actual outturn | See answer above |
| Cllr Cane | What proportion of staff time is spent supporting the Trading companies? | Time recording is not undertaken, but as the Trading Companies have their own finance team, the amount of support provided is relatively small. |
| Cllr Cane | Why no staff development and CPD? | See answer to Councillor Holtzmann's question above |
| Cllr Cane | What are the 3 top risks for delivery of this service plan? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The budget assumes that the Fair Funding Review will take place in April 2026, if this was to be brought forward that would significantly impact on the Council's budget. • The timing of the 2022/23 and 2023/24 Audits of the Statement of Accounts. • Staff changes |
| Cllr Cane | What improvements will residents see as a result of this service plan? | As an internal support service, there will be little direct impact on residents, but the support provided should allow other services to provide a high quality of service to their customers. |
| HR Services | | |
| Cllr Cane | What lessons were learnt from the end of year Performance report for this service? | <p>The rollout of the new Business Travel and Expenses Policy has addressed the majority of the actions that were recommended in the Staff Claims Audit. The improvements to the mileage claim form had to be restricted to what could and could not be built which is why we have had to add some instructions for users.</p> <p>Since the new mileage form has gone live, we are aware that some claimants had some problems, e.g. those who had already started a claim, but these have now been rectified.</p> |

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| Cllr Cane | Why no staff development and CPD? | Staff development forms part of an individual's training and development plan which is separate to the service plan. |
| Cllr Cane | What is HR doing to assist the other departments in recruitment, retention, staff training and analysis of staffing needs | <p>Recruitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing advice on the procedures • checking and publishing adverts • collating applications • inviting candidates for interview • interviewing (where required) • obtaining references • advising on starting salaries • ensuring Right to work checks and DBS checks have been carried out (if required) • preparing contracts for new starters • supporting managers with the induction and probationary process <p>Retention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recruiting the right people • offering flexible work arrangements • providing opportunities for training and development • offering exit interviews to understand why staff leave <p>Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • launching a new eLearning system with SkillGate which gives us access to a library of 1300 e-learning courses to support staff's professional development, covering topics such as leadership, presentation skills, IT skills and wellbeing. • Mandatory training, such as Health and Safety, Fraud Awareness, Equality and Inclusion etc. will now be delivered through SkillGate's Traffic Light system and staff will be given 8-weeks to complete them, after that they will receive a red light. Managers will have access to a red/green 'traffic light' report enabling them to see the compliance status of their teams. • For managers who are responsible for approving time and expense claims, HR have created a bespoke e-learning course on the requirements of our new Business Travel and Expenses policy and their responsibilities when approving time and expense claims. |

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| Cllr Cane | What are the 3 top risks for delivery of this service plan | <p>Significant changes to employment legislation scheduled for this year is likely to impact service delivery and meeting the changes required to policies and guidance.</p> <p>Staffing – with only a small team, unforeseen staff absence will significantly impact delivery of the service.</p> <p>Non-compliance with employment legislation</p> |
| Cllr Cane | What improvements will residents see as a result of this service plan? | The updated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will be updated for 2025-2028 and will be subject to public consultation with residents. |
| Infrastructure and Strategic Housing | | |
| Cllr Cane | What lessons were learnt from the end of year Performance report for this service? | The positive impact that CIL and other grant funding has on local communities |
| Cllr Cane | Why has the CIL payments outstanding increased from 4% to 13%? | Potentially due to the current economic climate, as some developers are citing increasing costs as the reason for being unable to pay their CIL contribution. Since the report was produced one payment has been received reducing the figure to 12% |
| Cllr Cane | Why no reference to provision of retirement accommodation when a Planning Inspector recently described the need within East Cambs as 'acute'? | The service provides for all types of housing. The list is not exhaustive. |
| Cllr Cane | Why not a clear target for delivering at least 200 affordable homes a year? | ECDC do not directly deliver affordable homes. However, this Service facilitate the delivery through its support to CLTs and the Strategic Housing Enabler's work with the Planning Team. |
| Cllr Cane | Why no performance measure for improving the CIL financial management, to address the weaknesses identified by internal audit? | All of the actions identified by internal audit have already been completed. |
| Cllr Cane | Is adequate staff time being allocated to CIL financial management | The Council has a CIL Officer who is employed for 30 hours per week, which is considered sufficient. Regular 1:1s are held with the Infrastructure and Strategic |

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| | and how is a 'single point of failure' being avoided? | Housing Manager to monitor CIL. The Infrastructure and Strategic Housing Manager and Director Community have access to the CIL mailbox and the CIL database and procedure notes are also available to ensure continuity should the CIL Officer be out of the office. |
| Cllr Cane | What incentive is there for Parishes to provide Parish Walks leaflets if they then have to pay for extra dog bins (as being considered by the Waste Services Working Party) | Dog bins is an issue for the Waste Services Working Party. |
| Cllr Cane | What are the 3 top risks for delivery of this service plan? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to National Guidance Legislation impacting on internal processes • The current economy meaning that housebuilding slows down and a reduction in CIL and S106 contributions • Changes to staffing/staff sickness/unable to recruit in post |
| Cllr Cane | What improvements will residents see as a result of this service plan? | The publication of 5 new route feasibility studies and improved awareness of local walks via the Parish Walks Leaflet project. The benefits provided by CIL and s106 contributions. |
| ICT | | |
| Cllr Cane | What lessons were learnt from the end of year Performance report for this service? | The ICT Manager is on annual leave – response to follow |
| Cllr Cane | Have the improvements to the Virtual Environment Software and Storage Infrastructure been delivered? | Currently being delivered within 2024/25. Projects are underway and scheduled for completion by Q3. |
| Cllr Cane | What resource has been allocated to the GIS data cleansing project? | The ICT Manager is on annual leave – response to follow |
| Cllr Cane | What are the 3 top risks for delivery of this service plan? | The ICT Manager is on annual leave – response to follow |

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| Cllr Cane | What improvements will residents see as a result of this service plan? | The ICT Manager is on annual leave – response to follow |
| Legal Services | | |
| Cllr Cane | What lessons were learnt from the end of year Performance report for this service? | Most of our cases are completed within 10 working days; however, s106 agreements and more complex conveyancing matters can be 20 days or more. |
| Cllr Cane | How does giving a figure for fees recovered provide evidence that recovery has been maximised – shouldn't this be a percentage? | The level of fees recovered is very much determined by the level of instructions/fee paid work that is received and completed |
| Cllr Cane | How do you ensure that all staff are aware of how to recognise an FOI request especially if it doesn't go through the standard procedure? Where do these measures record FOI requests which were not initially recognised as such? | FOI is covered in the Corporate induction session for new staff where they are advised that if they receive a request for information (that is not already in the public domain) then to forward it to foi@eastcambs.gov.uk where it can be officially logged. Staff will also email the Information Officer if they are not sure to check whether it is an FOI request. The Information Officer does not keep a note of which requests were initially sent to Officers rather than directly to the Information Officer. |
| Cllr Cane | Why no reference to services provided to the Trading Companies? | No legal services have been provided to the Trading companies through the year. |
| Cllr Cane | Why no reference to services provided to Parish Councils? | The legal services team is the in-house legal team for the Council and does not provide external advice to Parish Councils. The MO provides Standards advice to Parish Councils only. |
| Cllr Cane | Why no reference to supporting the Crematorium project? | Apart from input by the Director Legal at CMT, no legal services have been provided to support the Crematorium project this year. |
| Cllr Cane | What are the 3 top risks for delivery of this service plan? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff retention 2. Recruitment |

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| | | 3. Major legal challenges to the Council/exceptionally large caseload. |
| Cllr Cane | What improvements will residents see as a result of this service plan? | The continued digitisation of the local land charges service will deliver a simpler and easier customer journey and reduce paper |
| Open Spaces & Facilities | | |
| Cllr Cane | What lessons were learnt from the end of year Performance report for this service? | It has been important to continue to grow and develop relationships with other agencies to incorporate biodiversity ambitions into our open spaces. Having a central system for managing Council owned assets has enabled the service to monitoring key requirements throughout our asset base. |
| Cllr Cane | Does ECDC offer Grounds maintenance services or does ECTC? | Historically ECDC does have contracts for Grounds Maintenance Services that are then delivered by ECTC. ECTC also promotes its service to organisations that are not the Council. |
| Cllr Cane | Why is our priority with partners/agencies, Parish Councils and Schools to maximise income, rather than to deliver a cost effective service? | The service is cost effective in so far as it has the level of human and physical resources necessary to deliver a quality service. The measure of whether the service is cost effective is a matter for those organisations employing the service. |
| Cllr Cane | How many of our buildings have an EPC rating of each of C, D and E? | C- 6 D- 3 E- 1 |
| Cllr Cane | Why do we condition the performance measure to protect our environment keeping Biodiversity at the forefront of our operations with “wherever possible” | Not all areas of land are suitable for biodiversity, for example play areas, and areas for recreational use, e.g. football. |
| Cllr Cane | What are the 3 top risks for delivery of this service plan? | Recruitment of Health & Safety Advisor (there are interim plans in place whilst this is being carried out) Assessing the implications of the Environment Act and the impact this may have on the Council’s Open Spaces. For |

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| | | <p>example, where developers seek to use Council owned land to off-set their biodiversity. We will continue to work closely with the Strategic Planning Team on this.</p> <p>Succession planning needs to be considered and to ensure that recruitment happens so there is limited disruption to service continuity.</p> |
| Cllr Cane | What improvements will residents see as a result of this service plan? | There are a wide range of services that residents will continue to enjoy, these range from public conveniences to open spaces for play and recreation, and we will continue to work to ensure our assets are maintained responsibly. |
| Reprographics | | |
| Cllr Cane | What lessons were learnt from the end of year Performance report for this service? | The consistent increase in a demand for Reprographics service across graphic design, specialist printing, mail merge, accessibility and digital integration of council's print and web publications has been met successfully by the team. The investment into our professional skills, equipment and digital procedures has also improved the efficiencies, maximised the corporate and commercial opportunities and contributed to the council's budget. |
| Cllr Cane | What are the 3 top risks for delivery of this service plan? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People – staff shortages, sickness, being unable to recruit to post, lengthy training of any new member of the team and increased difficulty in communication across the 'part time' team. 2. Equipment – the provision of the mail service, specialist printing and finishing service, suspect parcel screening, graphic design, photography and mail merge is depended on the availability and safety of the specialist equipment. 3. Software and licensing – the provision of graphic design, specialist printing, photography, mail merge, Document Management System of Planning and Building Control application documents and procurement of consumables is depended on the |

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| | | licensed software and access to the internet. |
| Cllr Cane | What improvements will residents see as a result of this service plan? | Reprographics is a specialist internal service supporting the delivery of all other services (elections, planning, building control, communications and so on) across graphic design, printing, finishing, mail service and document management. We will continue to support the visibility and recognition of council's publications by ensuring an accessibility compliance and a consistent corporate branding. We will continue to support the digital and print communications to our residents and businesses via an effective mail service and via the input of planning application documents to Public Access. |
| Cllr Trapp | Reprographics: First two targets (and even more on following pages) are as a percentage, but the output is no. of items; were there any requests not completed by the agreed deadlines? | All requests have been completed to agreed deadlines and the percentages should have been included for the relevant targets. The numbers are quoted to show the scale of operation. |
| Cllr Trapp | 'One to one' meetings, are they for staff appraisal or some other function? | 'One to one' meetings are regular, at least monthly, meetings with individual team members to discuss the progress of additional tasks, review performance and support the development of skills |
| Strategic Planning | | |
| Cllr Cane | What lessons were learnt from the end of year Performance report for this service? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That preparing neighbourhood plans remains a high priority for many parish councils, and consequently ECDC resource requirements remains high to support such parishes. 2. That the most effective way the Council can further it's climate mitigation and nature recovery ambitions is via engaging with the public on matters which feel real and tangible to the public. For example, our public vote, leading to hedgehog recovery ambitions (rather than ECDC attempting to support change which has less |

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| | | <p>resonance or interest by the general public).</p> <p>3. That the Environment Act is bringing about fundamental change to this service area, especially in terms of Biodiversity Net Gain, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the new statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity.</p> |
| Cllr Cane | <p>What are the resourcing issues which are delaying the Updated Five Year Land Supply? What are the implications of the delay?</p> | <p>The Service area is effectively two separate service areas, one half for planning policy/neighbourhood planning and the other half for climate/nature. The planning policy resource is 1FTE officer, and 0.5FTE manager. However, the 1FTE was only 0.5FTE for the vast majority of the year due to a reduction in hours for the post holder. A recent recruitment exercise failed to secure additional support. The combination of limited staff resource and a higher than expected level of neighbourhood planning meant the updated Five Year Land Supply Report has been delayed. The implications of this delay are not significant, and are outweighed by the successful adoption of the update of the Local Plan in October 2023 which reconfirmed a manageable housing requirement (which then feeds into the five year calculations). The updated Five Year Housing Land Supply Report is imminent, and we are confident it will demonstrate a healthy forward supply of homes well in excess of five years' worth. Of fundamental importance, we are not presently being challenged for a lack of five years supply by any applicant, and have not had to defend such a position at any recent appeals.</p> |
| Cllr Cane | <p>When is the updated 5 year land supply expected to be published?</p> | <p>Imminently, and certainly before the end of April 2024.</p> |
| Cllr Cane | <p>Are the BNG arrangements on the website?</p> | <p>Basic BNG arrangements are on the website. However, a large volume of national guidance and regulations were published in February and March 2024, and once fully understood we intend to publish local guidance as soon as possible on our own website. However, BNG is a statutory process, with complex</p> |

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| | | and comprehensive legislation and national guidance, and it is going to be a significant learning exercise for the council, developers and landowners. |
| Cllr Cane | What are the 3 top risks for delivery of this service plan? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staffing resource. The service area presently comprises just 3.5FTE staff with a 0.5FTE vacancy, covering all aspects of planning policy, neighbourhood planning, climate change, nature recovery and climate adaptation. Staff sickness or resignations can therefore have a major effect on service delivery, compounded by the fact that recruitment of planning officers and ecologists is extremely challenging (this is a local and national issue, not just an East Cambridgeshire issue). Loss of any one of the 3.5FTE would be a major risk. At the point we commence a new Local Plan, we will need to recruit additional experienced planning officers, and there is a considerable risk that this might not be easy or successful. The scale of demand on the service area from parish councils preparing neighbourhood plans needs also to be taken into account. 2. Implementing the provisions of the Environment Act. This is especially so for BNG, because of the complexity, the statutory requirements and the expertise needed. But also the Cambridgeshire wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy (being prepared over 2024/25). 3. The ongoing uncertainty over national plan making legislation. This is in terms of when will the new plan making system come into effect, and what is expected by that new system. |
| Cllr Cane | What improvements will residents see as a result of this service plan? | Over the coming 12 months, the most prominent improvements residents will see as a result of the service area are anticipated to be: |

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| | | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A five year housing land supply maintained, therefore significantly reducing the risk of speculative development on the edges of our villages. 2. 'On the ground' nature related activity, building on recent activity such as orchard and oak tree planting, pride of place nature related projects and running events such as the Ely Green Fair. 3. More generally, it is hoped that residents will 'see' the Council's on-going commitments to reduce its own carbon emissions and help others reduce theirs. |
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Agenda Item 8 - Local Plan Climate Change and Nature Recovery Chapter: Update

| Questioner | Question | Response |
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| Cllr Cane | What consultation did the Government carry out before issuing the WMS on 13 December 2023? | None. WMSs do not undergo any form of consultation. |
| Cllr Cane | Has the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) advised that Local Authorities should continue to pursue net zero policies, in spite of the WMS? | Not exactly in so many words, but it has strongly raised concerns with Government about the content of the 13 December 2023 WMS, as set out in this letter: https://www.tcpa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Joint-Letter-to-SoS-13-Dec-WMS-FINAL_web-vrsn-1.pdf |

Agenda Item 9 – Draft Hedgehog Recovery Design Guidance

| Questioner | Question | Response |
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| Cllr Cane | Does the Council have an estimate for hedgehog numbers in East Cambs? | No. The only data we have is sightings recorded, which was 76 across East Cambridgeshire in 2023, broken down to specific locations. However, this data is mostly of use to identify where hedgehogs live, rather than their quantity, as many hedgehogs will go unsighted and unrecorded, whilst some hedgehogs might get recorded more than once. Part of our long term hedgehog recovery ambitions is to improve our understanding of broad hedgehog numbers and locations in East Cambridgeshire. However, it is reasonable to assume that there |

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| | | has been a very steep decline in hedgehog numbers in East Cambridgeshire on the basis of national evidence together with anecdotal remarks of residents we engaged with over summer 2023, where many older residents commented how few they now see compared with their childhood, whilst many children said they'd never seen a real hedgehog in the wild. |
| Cllr Cane | Do we have any plans to measure hedgehog numbers? | We actively encourage residents to record sightings on an interactive map, including via this recent press release: https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/press/plea-hedgehog-sightings-be-recorded-interactive-map We are focussing on sightings first, to establish more clearly where hedgehogs are present in East Cambridgeshire. This will then help determine the most effective places to create habitats and encourage resident activity. We then hope sightings increase over time, and over wider areas. It is probably impractical to measure actual hedgehog numbers with any accuracy unless a very significant resource was made available. |
| Cllr Cane | Has the Council considered participating in the National Hedgehog Monitoring Programme - The National Hedgehog Monitoring Programme - People's Trust for Endangered Species (ptes.org) ? | We are not presently actively part of that programme, though are aware of the trials ongoing. The resource implications would be significant to be actively involved. For now, we are focussing on sightings. |
| Cllr Holtzmann | If all of EastCambs is in principle suitable for Hedgehogs, why does HR1 state that "where hedgehogs are known to be present on site" instead of presuming this in general to create new opportunities for hedgehogs? | That quote should not be taken out of context of the policy as a whole. The opening paragraphs of the policy make it clear that the policy as a whole applies to all development schemes, irrespective of whether hedgehogs are known to be present. The third paragraph says: <i>For all residential development, excluding householder applications, the planning application must provide a scheme of hedgehog recovery proposals, irrespective of whether hedgehogs are known to be on site or not.</i> However, where hedgehogs are known to be present, criterion (a) also comes into effect (within which is the text quoted in the question), which requires an additional requirement on developers to set out how |

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| | | those hedgehogs, and their habitats, will be conserved and enhanced. |
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Agenda Item 10 – Asset Management Plan 2024/25 and Asset Update

| Questioner | Question | Response |
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| Cllr Cane | How will the asset management records be affected by the GIS update? | Detailed discussions are still to be had on this matter. |
| Cllr Cane | Have all the Council buildings been assessed for RAAC? | An assessment been carried out and no RAAC has been identified. The age of the Council buildings either pre-date the use of RAAC and were built after RAAC was used. |
| Cllr Cane | What does “where possible” mean in “The Council will ensure that it identifies, assesses and where possible prevents or adequately controls the risks to health from hazardous substances used in or created by workplace activities so as to prevent ill health.” | The document will be amended to replace ‘where possible’ with ‘as necessary’ |
| Cllr Cane | Why did the public carpark works cost so much more than budget despite not carrying out all the works? | Once the work commenced we identified other works that need to be completed and it was more cost effective to complete the works at the same time. |
| Cllr Cane | Why do the Littleport Depot works show in 2023/24 and 2024/25? | This is to show the full context of the budget approved when the Depot Improvement Budget was originally agreed. |
| Cllr Cane | Why was spend on gutter cleaning at the Grange twice as much as budgeted? | This because the original quote was for a mechanical clean and when it came to carrying out the works it was necessary for this to be a manual clearance and 2 operatives were needed. |
| Cllr Holtzmann | Is it correct that Oliver Cromwell House is a freehold and not leased out? | Oliver Cromwell House is owned by the District Council on a freehold basis but is leased to the City of Ely Council. |
| Cllr Holtzmann | Why is there no management budget and planned expenditure for | This is usually spend through Section 106 contributions when the need is identified. |

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| | any of the play areas in the District in Appendix 2? | |
| Cllr Holtzmann | The only expenditure in all the play parks in the district was a flag pole. How is broken equipment accounted for? | From time to time there is a need to carry out repairs, maintenance or even replacement of play areas across the district. This is generally met through Section 106 contributions which is separate from the asset budget. |

Agenda Item 11 – Whistle Blowing Policy

| Questioner | Question | Response |
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| Cllr Cane | Why is there no address for a written letter? It's difficult to be anonymous by email or on the phone | At 7.3 in the Policy, it sets out that concerns can be raised in writing addressed to "Confidential Whistleblowing" at the Council Offices. If Members would prefer that this is amended to "Council Offices at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 4EE" then this amendment can be made. The whistleblowing provision on the Council's intranet allows the submission of a whistleblowing concern without an email, telephone number, name, or address. |
| Cllr Holtzmann | 5.3 Who is going to make this decision? | The Council's Monitoring Officer as set out in the Constitution. |
| Cllr Holtzmann | 6.4 How can the council establish whether there is a reasonable belief? Could this be circumvented by having an independent institution to follow up with any concerns? | The test is whether the employee has a reasonable belief that the disclosure is in the public interest as set out in the legislation. This is an objective test and is made on a case by case basis. |
| Cllr Holtzmann | 7.3. Who monitors whistleblowing.eastcambs.gov.uk? | The Monitoring Officer. |
| Cllr Holtzmann | 8.5. Why are acknowledgement and response not separate? | 8.5 states that the acknowledgement will be sent with an indication of how long it will take to provide a final response. The response will therefore be sent separately after investigation |
| Cllr Holtzmann | 8.7. How is that decided? | The Monitoring Officer will make this decision depending on the severity of the concern. |

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| Cllr Trapp | Page 10, para. 8.5: why is the acknowledgement of receipt not done asap, and, as here, entwined with the outcome of the initial findings? | 8.5 states that the acknowledgement will be sent with an indication of how long it will take to provide a final response. The response will therefore be sent separately after investigation |
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Agenda Item 12 – Annual Review of RIPA Policies

| Questioner | Question | Response |
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| Cllr Cane | Why is an Equality Impact Assessment not required? | The changes made to the RIPA and CHIS policies refer to staff training and this has no external effect. Therefore, an EIA is not required. |

Agenda Item 13 - Community Land Trust Pre-Development Grant Application

| Questioner | Question | Response |
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| Cllr Cane | Will the affordable houses be for rent only? | There will be a mix of affordable rent and shared ownership homes. |
| Cllr Cane | Why weren't these costs covered as part of the agreement to sell the land to Bellway Homes? | It is not unusual for such fees to be covered by the CLT. Some fees were secured through the Community Housing Fund. Unfortunately, the fees awarded for lender arrangements were returned to Homes England as they could not be spent within the time frames prescribed by Homes England. |
| Cllr Cane | Has Lucy Frazer MP shared her concerns about Bellway Homes with the District Council? | It is understood that Lucy Frazer MP raised concerns directly with Bellway. |
| Cllr Cane | Why did the CLT have negative grant income in the year to 31 March 2023? | As a consequence of the protracted negotiations Kennett CLT could not spend part of their grant award (related to lender fees) and therefore the money had to be returned to Homes England. |
| Cllr Cane | The CLT's accounts for the year to 31 March 2023 state "Contract negotiations on the individual sale agreements with Bellway for our 30 homes, 4 x SB Plots, the CLT Office, the Allotments, the Healthcare facility land in the Village Centre, and the Public Open Space. Because the negotiations have been | The CLT has seen an increase of fees that result from the protracted negotiations. The request arises from the increase that cannot be covered from grants already secured and paid out. If this grant is approved, then Kennett CLT can continue with completing the necessary agreements. |

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| | <p>protracted, Solicitor's and our Legal adviser's fees have risen so we needed to apply for a grant from the ECDC CLT fund to cover these." How does that comply with ""The grant cannot be used to fund activity that has happened in the past, or prior to the grant being awarded. Groups must not start spending any money until the grant has been approved by way of issuing a formal grant agreement."?</p> | |
| Cllr Cane | <p>Did Kennett CLT become a Registered Provider of Social Housing?</p> | <p>Kennett CLT is in the process of becoming a Registered Provider. The initial application was submitted; however, the application was cancelled by the Regulator as Kennett CLT (due to the delays referenced) could not provide evidence of ownership within the prescribed timescales. The Regulator has requested that the CLT reapplies at the point on which a known date of ownership (and evidence of contracts) can be provided. No fees have been paid to the Regulator to date.</p> |
| Cllr Cane | <p>Does Kennett CLT have the power to pay dividends, as suggested by their accounts to the year ended 31 March 2023?</p> | <p>Kennett CLT is a Community Benefit Society and therefore is not capable of paying dividends. Surplus/profit will be reinvested into community activities defined in the objects.</p> <p>Officers have confirmed with Kennett CLT that there has not been a change to this registration. It has been brought to the CLTs attention that the accounts reference Co-operative and Community Benefits Society.</p> |
| Cllr Cane | <p>What is the average wage for people in Kennett and for people in East Cambridgeshire?</p> | <p>The Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Insight Website provides data on various themes including Employment.</p> <p>Local-Economic-Assessment-Technical-Documents-East-Cambridgeshire.pdf (wpenline.com)</p> <p>Some information is available at Ward level (Fordham & Isleham)</p> <p>Overview - Ward Fordham & Isleham Report Builder for ArcGIS (cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk)</p> <p>No information is held specific to Kennett.</p> |

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| Cllr Cane | What are the planned affordable housing costs? | <p>It is unclear what the question is asking.</p> <p>If the question relates to how much Kennett CLT are paying for the houses from Bellway, this information is not in the public domain.</p> <p>If the question relates to how much an individual will pay the CLT for the benefit of occupying a rented or shared ownership property, then affordable rent will be charged at 80% of market value and shared ownership charged in accordance with the rules of shared ownership properties. There is currently a limit on the charge set at 2.75% of the value of the shared owned by Kennett CLT.</p> |
| Cllr Cane | Have Kennett CLT received a grant from the Community Housing Fund, or other funder, to become a Registered Provider of Social Housing, complete the obtain valuations and a mortgage lenders commitment and to complete the development and sale agreements? | <p>Kennett CLT has previously received a grant from the Community Housing Fund for:</p> <p>Legal fees for Development and Sale Agreements. The funding sought from the Council is additional to what was secured from this grant.</p> <p>Legal Adviser Fees. The funding sought from the Council is additional to what was secured from this grant.</p> <p>Registered Provider Application fees. No funds were spent from the Community Housing Fund and these were reprofiled with Homes England and spent on more Community Engagement work.</p> <p>VAT Advice.</p> <p>RICS survey.</p> <p>Community engagement. As referenced above this was increased following reprofiling.</p> <p>Admin and finance costs.</p> <p>Commitment Fee from Lender. As referenced above this was returned to Homes England as it could not be spent within the prescribed timeframe.</p> <p>Director Community is satisfied that there is no doubling between the grants previously awarded and the grant being sought.</p> |

Agenda Item 14 – Bus, Cycle, Walk Working Party

| Questioner | Question | Response |
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| Cllr Cane | Why wasn't a meeting called to discuss the route options under the Combined Authority Mayoral precept? | This area of work is not within the Terms of Reference of the Bus, Cycle, Walk Working Party. |
| Cllr Trapp | Do we have a complete list of cycle paths that have been approved for going forward? | <p>Sustrans have produced route feasibility studies for the following routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fordham to Burwell • Haddenham to the A142 • Little Downham to Ely • Littleport to Ely • Swaffham Prior to Burwell • Ely – Stunty – Soham • Mepal – Sutton – Witcham – Witchford • Isleham to Fordham • Sutton to Earith • Wilburton to Cottenham <p>They also updated the cost section in the Wicken to Soham Route feasibility study</p> |