Little Downham Parish Council

Full Council Meeting- **January 2025 Minutes**

Date: Monday 13th January 2025 Time: 8pm

Venue: The Village Hall, Little Downham CB6 3ST

Attendees:	**Cllr Parson**	**Cllr Butcher**	**Cllr Scott**	**Cllr Moorhouse**
	Cllr Massey	**Cllr Waters**	**Cllr Travers**	**Cllr Taylor**

Members of the Public: 3

Clerk: Mrs Amy Jacklin

Assistant Clerk: Miss Kendle Hanslip

Start- 8pm

24/83 Welcome

The chairman welcomes everybody to the meeting.

24/84 Apologies

Cllr Winters, Cllr Godsmark and Cllr Spofforth.

24/85 Councillor Declaration of Interest

Cllr Taylor declares a personal interest in 24/90.6

24/86 Public and Press Participation

None

24/67 To receive County Councillor and District Councillor Reports.

Cllr Lorna Dupree

Cllr Dupree had sent her report prior to the meeting.

Being a 'trauma-informed' council- This motion was about those delivering council services needing to be aware of the effects of trauma on residents with whom they come into contact, and how to support trauma survivors. I'm continuing to work with several families of young adults whose experience of adult social care has itself been traumatising, and I made the point that the council also needs to improve its own practice and stop traumatising people. Special educational needs and disabilities This motion asked the council to respond to the Government's review of the school curriculum making clear the importance of an appropriate curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, and to gather information from secondary schools in the county on how they are ensuring they can meet the needs of all pupils. It also asked the Children & Young People Committee to consider how the child and adolescent mental health system is working and gather information about experience of special educational needs and disabilities in early years and primary school settings.

Mill Lane bridge, Huntingdonshire- This motion was about flooding at this location and the timetable for an options appraisal. It was voted down as unnecessary, as work is already under way.

A1421 Haddenham to Witcham Toll-This motion was about road safety options at this location and the timetable for a report. Again this was voted down as unnecessary, as this road will be included in a report coming to the Highways & Transport Committee shortly.

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Family farms and inheritance tax- This motion asked the council to write to the Secretary of State calling on the Government to stop changes to inheritance tax on family marks, and engage with the local farming community to offer support. I supported this, as it is an important issue locally and the Government's approach is wrong.

STRATEGY RESOURCES & PERFORMANCE

Council budget-Cambridgeshire County Council will set its budget on Tuesday 11 February, with recommendations being considered in advance by the Strategy Resources & Performance Committee on Tuesday 28 January. Each year councils are required to set a balanced budget for the year ahead. This has become more difficult in recent years for several reasons including

Growing demand for services and increasing complexity of health and care needs

Inflation

Market failures in services such as provision for children in care, with high demand, insufficient supply, provider profiteering, and diminished council negotiating power.

The totality of the council's gross budget, including schools and services funded by specific grants, is expected to be over £1.1 billion for 2025-26. Of this, over half (£567 million) is proposed to be spent on children, education and families, and health and adult social care. In December, councillors were told that efficiencies and savings or additional income of £34 million would be needed to set a balanced budget for 2025-26, and considered draft proposals to achieve this. However, the coming five years show an overall funding gap of £132 million, of which £73 million is not yet addressed.

ADULTS & HEALTH

Priors Field Sutton-Fantastic news that not only has the local NHS completed the purchase of the practice building at Priors Field to stabilise the future of primary care in Sutton—but it has also identified a preferred permanent provider of primary care services from the premises. Subject to a standstill period of eight working days (closing on Monday 6 January 2025) and there being no representations made during this time, the contract is to be awarded to St Mary's Surgery, an experienced provider of primary care services in the area. Once the standstill period has passed, Malling Health will work with St Mary's Surgery to ensure a smooth transition of services for both staff and patients ahead of the new contract coming into place from 1 April 2025. For more information about St Mary's Surgery see https://www.stmarysely.nhs.uk/. Throughout the transition period, patients registered with Priors Field Surgery will be able to continue to access GP services via the routes they are used to. The NHS will send formal letters to all patients registered with Priors Field Surgery on 15 January, subject to the standstill period coming to an end without representations having been made. Patient information, including helpful FAQs, can be found at https://www.cpics.org.uk/sutton/Huge thanks are due to the Priors Field Patient Participation Group and to other patients registered with Priors Field Surgery, who played a vital part in the NHS procurement process.

Social care reform—but not until 2028- The Government has promised to 'finally grasp the nettle on social care reform', with an independent commission due to begin work in April. Proposals on a stable system for the long-term funding of adult social care in England have been needed for years. But these are unlikely to be delivered before 2028 at the earliest, the government has confirmed. The proposed commission, chaired by Baroness Louise Casey, is not due to publish its final report until then. Meanwhile, councils and care providers across the country are saying this is far too long to wait for reform of vital social care services which are already on their knees.

Urgent and emergency care-The County Council's Adults & Health Committee received a report last month for their scrutiny on the performance of the NHS in urgent and emergency care. During 2024/25, performance has been below the planned trajectories submitted as part of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) operational plan, and below national standards. Two key national metrics for urgent and emergency care are that Emergency departments should see and treat a minimum of 78 per cent of patients within four hours of arriving in the department by the end of March 2025, and Patients categorised by the ambulance trust as Category 2 emergency, should have an ambulance response time within 30 minutes. Both these targets remain behind plan, with the NHS under considerable pressure locally and nationally.

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION (COSMIC)

CAB grant for income maximisation The County Council's COSMIC committee has agreed a grant of £800,000 over two years to Citizens Advice in the county for income maximisation—working with residents to ensure they are in receipt of all financial assistance they are eligible for, and helping people out of poverty across Cambridgeshire by providing a long-term solution to financial hardship.Since income maximisation work began in 2023, 5,455 Cambridgeshire residents have accessed the service, resulting in an income gain of £3,887,844.The CAB is sadly no longer supported by the district council in East Cambridgeshire. Face to face appointments with Cambridgeshire Rural CAB are available in Fenland and Huntingdonshire, but only for residents there.

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

Non-recycled waste- A recent article in the Guardian newspaper reported that 87 per cent of Cambridgeshire's non-recyclable waste goes to landfill—second only to Essex. The council commented: "Our first priority is to reduce, re-use and to recycle as much as possible, as there are limited methods available to treat the waste that is left over in the short-medium term."We are actively working with both our waste contractor, as well as Central Government, to try and find the best long-term solution to manage the county's waste." It is important to note that All mixed dry recycling collected from Cambridgeshire households and household recycling centres is recycled

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All food and garden waste collected from households is composted.

Where legislation prohibits sending waste to landfill the council is in full compliance.

Where possible, black bag waste is treated using energy recovery or mechanical biological treatment, to divert as much as possible from landfill.

The whole waste industry and legislative framework is currently going through a period of significant change. The council is awaiting detailed guidance from Government to inform its long-term waste strategy. Meanwhile the council is actively looking at more modern ways to treat waste that can't be recycled and is currently going to landfill.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

£10 million for road maintenance

The Government has announced how much each council area will receive for highways capital maintenance for 2025/26.For the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough area it's £10 million, with a quarter of that amount to be held back until the respective councils have proved they will meet certain—still to be announced—criteria. £10 million sounds a lot, but

The Government may hold back twenty-five per cent of it

It includes Peterborough as well as Cambridgeshire

In Cambridgeshire alone the backlog of highways maintenance is around £600 million.

Better than nothing, then, but a long way from what we need.

Prioritising the highways capital programme the council's Highways & Transport Committee on 3 December approved a new scoring system to prioritise planned capital highways maintenance schemes. Parish councils and county councillors were approached by the council to submit suggestions of roads that needed significant capital work. As part of this process, I put forward the straight section of Chain Causeway in Sutton from Earith Bridge to the beginning of the bends (see below); plus Black Bank, Hundred Foot Bank, and Head Fen Drove in Little Downham. When it meets in March, the committee expects to receive a proposed three year forward capital maintenance programme and an indicative programme for the following two years. The same meeting will also consider a proposed hierarchy for maintaining walking, wheeling, and cycling routes. Proposals for a hierarchy for maintaining Public Rights of Way is expected to follow in July or October.

Work on Chain Causeway Sutton Chain Causeway in Sutton is scheduled to be closed 24/7 from Monday 6 January to Friday 7 March, for work on the 'bends' between the end of The America and the start of the straight stretch down to Earith Bridge. The recommended diversion is via Witcham Toll and Haddenham, though Bury Lane and Sutton Gault to the Somersham-Earith road is another option when it's not flooded and if your car is robust. The A142 to Chatteris and A141 down to

Earith is also an option, but there is work scheduled with a road closure between Somersham and Earith in February. I have been asking for work to be carried out on the straight section from the bends to Earith Bridge at the same time, to maximise use of the road closure, but that depends on the council underspending on other projects so that it can stay within its budget. At the time of writing, I am awaiting an update on this.

Winter gritting reminder-With the weather taking a cold turn, a quick reminder about gritting on Cambridgeshire's roads. Cambridgeshire County Council's 37 gritting vehicles cover 44 per cent of the county's road network. Cambridgeshire is split into three gritting areas: Fenland and East, Huntingdonshire and South and finally Cambridge. Which roads are gritted and when will depend on forecast temperatures in each of these three areas, so there may be occasions when some parts of the county are gritted but not others. Roads on the gritting network are classified as primary or secondary routes. Primary routes are the priority for gritting, because they serve as major connecting routes for communities and allow people to get to work and access essential services. Secondary routes are gritted in addition to primary routes as and when resources allow when there is a forecast of a prolonged cold spell, where road surface temperatures fall below zero, or when snowfall is forecast. You can find which roads are primary or secondary gritting routes at https://maps.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/ In the Map categories menu to the left of the screen, choose Transport and Streets, then select Primary Gritting Routes and Secondary Gritting Routes from the drop-down menu. The Council checks detailed weather forecasts throughout the day, and at midday every day during winter receives road and air temperatures from twelve weather stations around the county. This information guides where and when to send out the gritters and how much salt needs to be spread. You can find more information about winter gritting in Cambridgeshire at https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/gritting-roads-cycleways-and-paths And the County Council posts regular updates on Facebook and Twitter, including road gritting news and weather warnings. In 2022, 14 people were killed, 379 seriously injured, and 1,227 slightly injured in reported road collisions on Great Britain's roads when there was rain, snow, sleet or foggy conditions, according to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. The AA has useful advice for driving in snow and ice, at https://www.theaa.com/driving-advice/seasonal/how-to-drive-in-snow

Speed cameras-I got a response I wasn't expecting when I asked at Cambridgeshire County Council's Highways & Transport Committee yesterday morning whether the council might consider the introduction of more speed cameras. In a discussion about Cambridgeshire's 'Vision Zero'—the aim to reduce to zero the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads—I pointed out how few speed cameras there are in Cambridgeshire compared with, for example, Staffordshire. The answer from road safety manager Simon Burgin was the one I expected, about the cost. But he went on to say that another factor was that 'there have to be the appropriate available court slots to deal with anybody committing speeding offences. Increasing enforcement could lead to people 'falling through the cracks' as there would simply not be space to 'push them through' the court system—and this was 'a bigger problem to solve' than the cost. It's yet another example of the collapse of the

justice system under the previous government. I also used the opportunity of the 'Vision Zero' discussion to ask about hold-ups of traffic behind slow-moving agricultural vehicles, and whether spaces at the sides of appropriate roads could be cut out and marked—in the same way as passing places on narrow roads—to enable agricultural vehicles to pull in and let following traffic pass. This would avoid the temptation of risky overtaking.

Witchford to Lancaster Way cycle path A resolution may now be in sight to enable the planned Witchford to Lancaster Way cycle path to proceed without financial risks falling on the Parish Council. Last month I reported that the county council had agreed to allocate funding from the 2025/26 Delivering Transport Strategy Aims budget for design and investigation work for this project and make a future budget allowance in case of overrun if the grant from the district council could not be extended beyond May 2027. This is the date set by Cambridgeshire Horizons, the source of the funding for the district council grant, for spending on the scheme. I also contacted the district council to investigate the potential for it to pay the grant directly to the county council and have now received a positive response.

Cllr Anna Bailey

Cllr Bailey had sent her report prior to the meeting

Local Government Reform

Central Government has issued a White Paper with plans for a radical reform of local Government alongside new powers for directly elected Mayors. The reforms are for new Unitary Councils (so the County and District Councils will be abolished) that serve population sizes of at least 500,000. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough currently have a total population of 908,000 so discussion is likely to centre around two Unitary Councils for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area. Parish Councils are not affected.

The Mayoral and County Council elections on 1st May 2025 will be going ahead. The aim of the Government is that elections for the new Unitary Councils will happen in May 2028 (with shadow Councils having been formed one year earlier).

Under the proposals Mayors are set to get new powers including strategic planning, meaning they will oversee the planning of new housing, jobs and infrastructure rather than the District (or new Unitary) Councils. Mayors are also set to Chair or Co-Chair the NHS Integrated Care Partnerships which oversee the planning and delivery of health services, as well as taking oversight of Police and Fire services. In Cambridgeshire we have the added complication of the Government having formed a new entity called the "Cambridge Growth Company Limited". This new organisation will take over the role of strategic planning in Greater Cambridge (Cambridge City and South Cambs). I have a concern that East Cambridgeshire will, via the back door of local Government reorganisation, be absorbed into the remit of this new organisation and that Government (via the Company) will then hold the power to decide where in East Cambs some of the new 150,000 homes, the solar farms and the wind farms should be located. The English Devolution White Paper can be viewed here: English Devolution White Paper- GOV.UK

A10- Cambridgeshire County Council on behalf of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) has been undertaking the work to consider the upgrade options, including dualling, for the A10 between Ely and Cambridge. The options were due to go out to consultation last March, but this has been delayed by the CPCA following the general election in July and no decision has yet been taken on when this work will progress.

Sanctuary Housing- I am due to have a second meeting with the Chief Executive (CEO) of Sanctuary Housing in February. I have been raising concerns with them about the number of empty properties, the poor repairs service, and the general maintenance and investment into the housing stock in East Cambs. Sanctuary owns around 10% of the total housing stock in our district and I am concerned about the levels of service received by residents.

Housing Register Back in House- In October last year the Council brought the Housing Register back in house. The Register, which is a record of everyone who has applied to be considered for a home owned by a social landlord, had previously been run by Sanctuary Housing Association. Bringing the housing register back under the wing of the district council is all about making it as easy as possible for residents to find the right accommodation to meet their needs and giving people more choice. While some people will just be happy to go online and register, often the need to move house is driven by a change of circumstances, such as the loss of a job, having children or a relationship breakdown. This is where we can help. We can take time to sit down with residents to look at the bigger picture and perhaps help out in other areas too, such as signposting to mental health charities, reviewing benefits or helping secure rental deposits. Since the service came back to the District Council we have some great stories about how individual residents have been supported to find suitable accommodation and with other issues in their lives.

Ely Road Accent Housing Site, Little Downham- I am pleased that Accent has stuck to their promise to redesign Plot 1 at the Ely Road site and they have now submitted an amended design with Plot 1 fronting onto Ely Road, instead of the side elevation which it was previously. You can view the amendments here: 24/01260/VARM | To Vary Condition 1 (Approved Plans) of previously approved 21/01322/FUM for Erection of 39 affordable dwellings and associated infrastructure | Land South West Of 14 To 20 Ely Road Little Downham Cambridgeshire CB6 2SN

Little Downham Book Café- I am aware of the efforts being made to try to retain the Book Café opening hours and District Council officers are supporting with information about funding opportunities.

24/88 Approval of Minutes

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1. To approve minutes for signature from Monday 2nd December 2024 and Wednesday 10th December 2024 **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes.
2. The initial two grants from East Cambs District Council have been agreed for the new children's playpark. It was **RESOLVED** for the clerk to source other grants (Mick George and Thalia) to obtain the full funding.
3. The clerk shared a written report prior to the meeting, no questions regarding this report were asked.

24/89 Financial Matters

1. To consider and approve monthly accounts and reconciliation **RESOLVED** to accept the monthly accounts and reconciliation up to 31st December 2024.
2. To approve invoices for payment **RESOLVED** to accept the monthly invoices for January payment.
3. To note the CCLA account has now been opened and the funds (£70,000) have been transferred from the Unity current account to the CCLA account (2/1/2025)
4. To agree a rota for authorising monthly payments **RESOLVED** to implement a rota to alternate authorisers. This will be sent to councillors in due course.
5. To note the mandate changes have been made to the Lloyds account as per councils' instruction.
6. To agree to close the two Lloyds accounts **RESOLVED** for the clerk to instruct for the accounts to be closed. Paperwork was signed by authorised signatories at the meeting.
7. To discuss renewing the Cambridgeshire ACRE membership **RESOLVED** council will not renew the ACRE membership for 2025. This is due to not using the benefits as a Parish council.

24/70 Planning Applications

1. 24/00807/FUL- 10 Pond Lane Little Downham Ely Cambridgeshire CB6 2TW Proposal: External alterations **RESOLVED** no comments were given.
2. 24/01239/FUL -18 Park Lane Little Downham Ely Cambridgeshire CB6 2TF Proposal: Change of use from dwelling and annexe to 2 no dwellings and associated works – Retrospective **RESOLVED** no comments were given.
3. 24/00811/FUL -13 Main Street Little Downham Ely Cambridgeshire CB6 2ST Proposal: Proposed steel flue for log burner **RESOLVED** no comments were given.
4. 24/01260/VARM- Land Southwest of 14 To 20 Ely Road Little Downham Cambridgeshire CB6 2SN Proposal: To Vary Condition 1 (Approved Plans) of previously approved 21/01322/FUM for Erection of 39 affordable dwellings and associated infrastructure **RESOLVED** council have asked for more information due changes being hard to identify.
5. 24/00769/FUL -CN Seeds Ltd 18 Main Street Pymoor Ely Cambridgeshire Proposal: Change of use from agricultural store to laboratory building – Retrospective **RESOLVED** no comments were given.
6. 24/01325/FUL - Land Northeast Of 1 Seventh Drove Little Downham Cambridgeshire. Proposal: Replacement dwelling **RESOLVED** council agreed unanimously (with one abstention) to **SUPPORT** this application.

24/91 Progress on Planning Applications (For Information)

1. 24/00594/FUL -Extension to existing building for storage of drainage equipment, relocation of existing storage containers, demolition of pole barn, extending parking and turning area and a retrospective barn demolition. Location: Farm Buildings Adjacent to Springfields Straight Furlong Pymoor APPROVED
2. 24/00772/AGN- New extension to agricultural building Location: Oaklands Straight Furlong Pymoor Ely Cambridgeshire APPROVED

24/92 Council Administration Matters

1. To discuss putting forward a suggestion for a street name for the new development on Ely Road **RESOLVED** council agreed due to the history of the site the name should include Hobbs. The suggestions put forward were Hobbs Close, Hobbs Way or Hobbs Yard.

2. To discuss changing the date for April's Full council meeting **RESOLVED** council agreed to change the date to the 7th of April instead of the 14th April.

24/93 Recreational Facilities

1. To agree a quotation for the remedial work for the Legionella Risk assessment **RESOLVED** council have agreed to accept the quotation from **Burtons Plumbing & Heating Ltd** for £275.

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Motion to Exclude the Public and Press

Under the Public Bodes (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted

24/94 The Book Café

To discuss the future funding for the book café **RESOLVED** this topic was discussed at length. Kendle will be in touch with potential volunteers to help run the book café from February. This will be reviewed frequently going forwards.

24/95 The Conservation Area

Council discussed the current constitution and made amendments. This information will be shared with he conservation committee on 16th January 2025.

24/96 To discuss a probation period

Council agreed the completion of the pavilion cleaner's probation and made changes to hours worked.

24/97 To discuss overtime or additional hours for the assistant clerk

Council agreed additional hours at the discretion of the clerk and chairman.

Re-Admit General Public

24/98 Date of next meeting

Monday 10th February 2025

****** NOTE Full council meetings will now be held on the second Monday of the month******

Close meeting 22.00

Chairman: Cllr D Parson

Clerk and RFO- Mrs Amy Jacklin, 5 Third Drove, Little Downham CB6 2UE

Tel: 07354 468757 **Email**: clerk@littledownhamparishcouncil.gov.uk

Signed: Dale Parson (Chair) ……

Dated:……

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