

Cllrs Alec Jones and Victoria Charlesworth

MONTHLY REPORT May 2021

Future of remote meetings

With the end of temporary legislation to allow remote meetings on May 6th and the court's decision to uphold the concept of present at a meeting not to be a virtual one. The District Council's after legal advice has taken a decision to for "*all decisions requiring action would be taken by the chief Executive in consultation with the Members, specifically through indicative remote voting*" exceptions to this are the trading companies (East Cambs Trading Company and street scene), where the decision will be taken by the monitoring officer and to planning and licensing committees where decisions by managers in consultation with relevant committee members.

Interestingly this is at odds with the county council decision that this would not be legal and has taken steps to hold next AGM meeting in a larger venue in Duxford!

With the differing legal interpretations, it is easy to see likely challenges to planning applications if they do not go the way of developers. And until it is tested in court it is difficult to predict how it will go!

Loans to East Cambridgeshire Community Land Trust (ECCLT)

The District Council approved a £390,000 loan to secure the freehold acquisition on 15 old MOD houses in Ely. This is a top up loan to the principle lender and the opposition had several concerns with this as:-

- 1) The lead party failed to show how they met official criteria for affordable given they are being sold at 100% of market value.
- 2) The risks involved given:-
 - The loan equates to 114% of the asset value
 - Debt security is weak in comparison to the primary lender
 - The ability of the CLT to repay is based on solely on regularly selling large chunks of equity to the lease holders.

Given that many of these houses had already been sold and borrowers had already parted with considerable sums for surveys and legal fees even though the CLT knew it didn't have the enough money to finalise the purchase. The Lib-Dems didn't object to this being passed but did want it subjected to a little more scrutiny.

Fen Flag

The Council past a motion at its last full meeting to endorse the use of the flag locally designed by Mr Bowman.



Mr Bowman writes that the symbol of the Fens is the Fen Tiger and that this designation derives from the, sometimes violent, opposition of the local population to the fen drainage schemes of the 17th century. 'Fen Tiger' is a well-known and well used nickname for someone from the Fens; many associations and businesses in the area use the term, sometimes with logos that feature tigers. Mr Bowman, aided by a number of people, has run a successful campaign since 2018 to encourage take up and usage of the flag, with the ultimate aim of having the flag officially recognised through inclusion in the registry of the Flag Institute. The flag is promoted online on social media and via direct canvassing for support and has steadily increased in visibility with flags being displayed in a number of locations as well as through the use of supporting materials such as postcards, stickers, keyrings and other items. Businesses and organisations supporting the flag campaign include those from the travel and tourism sector, food manufacturing, catering, and boating, as well as community clubs, the private boating community, FACT Community Transport, and Ely Tourist Information Centre. There is good evidence of widespread use of the flag and it is included on the British County Flags website.

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District Councillors for the Soham North