

Cllrs Alec Jones and Victoria Charlesworth

MONTHLY REPORT June 2021

Remote meetings reversal

The District Council's after legal further legal advice has taken to reverse its decision to continue with remote meetings and as such the first Planning meeting took place in the Hive sports hall in Ely. Consequently any Planning support or objections that require in personal support will now require attendance at the meetings although obviously written statements will still be taken into account.

Princess of Wales Hospital Ely

That the last planning meeting the Committee granted outline permission for new hospital buildings at the Princess of Wales Hospital, with demolition of out-patient blocks, the social club building and the porters' lodge, and redevelopment including inpatient and outpatient facilities, a new multi storey car park, access, and associated infrastructure

Cambridgeshire County Council now Lib/Lab coalition

The County Council changed its leadership after the Conservatives lost their majority. The District council does now have a couple of Lib-Dem County Councillors to help support Local issues should they need to be called upon. I foresee a good working relationship for the next 18 months 2 years before cracks start to show themselves within the coalition!

Finance & Assets Committee

The Council's Finance & Assets Committee meets on Monday 7 June to consider a number of matters, some of them in confidential session. Among the public items being recommended by the Council leadership are the following.

- Reviewing the Finance & Assets Hearings Sub-Committee, which hears complaints against councillors under the Code of Conduct. The proposal is to turn this into an Ethical Governance Sub-Committee, enabling it to review the Code of Conduct and associated guidance as well as consider individual cases. There is also a need to recruit a replacement non-voting Co-opted Town/Parish Council Member to fill the current vacancy.
- A one-off Soham High Street Renewal Capital Grant Fund scheme, using £25,000 from the £1M Market Towns Funding allocated to Soham by the

Combined Authority, for small projects in the centre of Soham up to £2,500 in value.

- Continuation of Palace Green Homes' tenancy of offices at Fordham until 18 December 2024, with the council 'instructing' its Trading Company to seek to reduce overheads by sub-letting part of the space.

Operational Services Committee

The Operational Services Committee meets on Monday 14 June to consider various items of business including the following.

- To approve the Council's second Environment Plan and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, endorse the actions of Council management, and welcome the first interim report of the Combined Authority's Climate Change Commission.
- To note the outcome of a review of the housing lettings policy of the sub-regional group of councils including East Cambridgeshire, and approve changes to the policy.
- To agree to become a member of CAPASP, the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Against Scams Partnership.

Unfinished business

- The planning application to turn the Mepal Outdoor Centre into a crematorium, promised by Christmas 2020, has still not been published.
- The meeting of the Bus Walking & Cycling Working Group to sort and prioritise residents' comments from the public consultation which finished over a year ago, was postponed and no fresh date has been set.
- The proposal by the Council leadership to introduce some sort of on-street parking enforcement by offering Council staff as police volunteers working under the direction of the Chief Constable has not yet reached any conclusion. All but a handful of councils in England still have police enforcing on-street parking, with the vast majority having introduced civil parking enforcement years ago.

Welcome back fund

The Welcome Back Fund is providing councils across England a share of £56 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support the safe return to high streets and help build back better from the pandemic. ECDC has been allocated £79,895 from the WBF. The aim of the Welcome Back Fund (WBF) is to help councils boost tourism, improve green spaces and provide more outdoor seating areas, markets and food stall pop-ups – giving people more, safer options to reunite with friends and relatives.

The WBF Guidance and FAQs documents can be found on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/welcome-back-fund>.

Project ideas have to be submitted to MHCLG for funding approval. All monies must be spent by 31st March 2022.

Round 2 of Ely area capacity rail consultation now open

The Council The public consultation for Round 2 will be open for the next six weeks, closing on 4 July 2021. The aim of the Ely area capacity enhancement (EACE) programme is to allow more trains to run through Ely by improving rail capacity and reliability for passenger services between key destinations. During this Round 2 consultation, proposals and options are being presented to the public for the first time to upgrade the railway in an area defined as Ely South that includes:

- Proposed infrastructure changes to part of the Soham branch line and Ely Dock junction
- Proposed changes to track and platforms at Ely station
- Options to upgrade the nearby Stuntney Road bridge
- Options to upgrade two bridges across the Great River Ouse adjacent to Ely marina
- Proposal to close Kiln Lane level crossing with options to maintain pedestrian and vehicle access to the east side of the railway.
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The feedback from this second round of consultation will help to progress designs prior to selecting preferred options and, subject to further funding, submitting a Transport and Works Act Order later in 2022.

Cllr Alec Jones

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District Councillors for Soham North Ward