

# STETCHWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Mrs. Karen Peck

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## ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

1<sup>st</sup> May 2026 at The Ellesmere Centre (Gredley Room) at 7.30pm

**Present:** Wayne Bell (Chair) WB, Alan Sharp (AS), John Puddick JP and County Councillor Edge JE.

<b>010526/1</b>	<b>Election of Chair &amp; Signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office form.</b> It was proposed by AS and seconded by JP that Wayne Bell be Chair of the Council for the forthcoming year. The declaration of interest was signed by both the Chair and Proper Officer.
<b>010526/2</b>	<b>Election of Vice-Chair &amp; Signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office form.</b> It was proposed by WB and seconded by AS that Piers Saunders be elected as Vice Chair of the Council for the forthcoming year. The declaration of office will be signed when the Vice Chair returns.
<b>010526/3</b>	<b>To receive &amp; approve apologies for absence.</b> Councillor Breen (SB) Councillor France (AF) Councillor Saunders (PS) All apologies were accepted.
<b>010526/4</b>	<b>To Receive Declarations of Pecuniary and non-Pecuniary Interest</b> Councillors to declare any personal and/or pecuniary interest in any item on the agenda and to inform the Chairman if they wish to speak on the matter during the Public Forum. There were no declarations made.
<b>010526/5</b>	<b>District &amp; County Councillors' Reports</b> Both the County and District Councillors gave a full Annual Report, attached to the minutes.
<b>010526/6</b>	<b>Open Forum for Public Participation</b> An opportunity for parishioners to address Parish Councillors and for Councillors declaring a prejudicial interest to address the meeting in relation to the business to be transacted. There were no members of the public in attendance and therefore no matters were raised.
<b>010526/7</b>	<b>To Approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2026</b> The minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 16 <sup>th</sup> March 2026 were agreed to be a true account of the meeting and signed by the Chair. Motion carried unanimously.
<b>010526/8</b>	<b>Council Business</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) To discuss Annual Play Area Inspection Report and works required – if received The annual play area inspection report had not yet been received and therefore there was no further decision.</li><li>b) To discuss and approve Ellesmere Centre Summer Show Hire and approve relevant insurances/risk assessments The Parish Council has received all insurances and risk assessments and approved usage of the recreational field for the event.</li><li>c) To ratify the Parish Council Insurance Renewal for 2026-27 The Parish Council had reviewed the renewal premium, and it was agreed unanimously to approve the renewal at a cost of £716.23.</li><li>d) To receive and update on the Hockey Proposal The Ellesmere Centre and the Parish Council had been approach by Newmarket Hockey Club as a possible site for a new facility. Although both parties can see the idea, in principle as good, there are several concerns/issues, and it is felt that should funding be secured by the club that consultation with the village is essential. No formal proposal has been made yet.</li><li>e) To discuss and approve the Street Light Maintenance Contract for 26-27 The Parish Council had sought quotations for the renewal of the Street Light Maintenance Contract, and it was unanimously agreed to approve the 3-year contract from K&amp;M Lighting for the sum of £234.60 plus vat.</li></ul>
<b>010526/9</b>	<b>The Ellesmere Centre</b> To receive the latest Ellesmere Centre Report. AS updated that the position to manage the Post Office had received 7 applications but unfortunately all applicants had since withdrawn from the process. The Trustees are investigating the option to repurpose the site as a Community Post Office like the one in Wilburton.
<b>010526/10</b>	<b>Finance</b> To approve bank reconciliation up until 30 <sup>th</sup> April 2026 The bank reconciliation for March and April 2026 was approved unanimously. Motion carried.

<b>010526/11</b>	<b>Finance</b> - to approve accounts for payment and income up until 21.04.2026. All payments and income were approved unanimously. Motion carried.																																													
(a)	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Ref:</th> <th>Payee/Item – March &amp; April</th> <th></th> <th></th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>(1)</td> <td>Red Shoes Accounting - payroll</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>£50.40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(2)</td> <td>TBM – Renewal of ESET for 1 year</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>£67.50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(3)</td> <td>CAS – Insurance Renewal</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>£716.23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(4)</td> <td>RH Landscapes – Grass Cutting April</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>£343.20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(6)</td> <td>SSE – Street Light Energy (March Only)</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>£88.64</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(7)</td> <td>S&amp; J Accountancy Services – Internal Audit</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>£90.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(8)</td> <td>Unity Trust – Service Charge</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>£7.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(9)</td> <td>HMRC, Staffing and Expenses</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>£1200.22</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Ref:	Payee/Item – March & April			Total	(1)	Red Shoes Accounting - payroll			£50.40	(2)	TBM – Renewal of ESET for 1 year			£67.50	(3)	CAS – Insurance Renewal			£716.23	(4)	RH Landscapes – Grass Cutting April			£343.20	(6)	SSE – Street Light Energy (March Only)			£88.64	(7)	S& J Accountancy Services – Internal Audit			£90.00	(8)	Unity Trust – Service Charge			£7.00	(9)	HMRC, Staffing and Expenses			£1200.22
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(b)	To note monies received: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>£158.79 – Unity Trust Bank (Interest)</li> </ul>																																													
(c)	To approve and adopt Standing Orders The Council reviewed Standing Orders and they were unanimously adopted.																																													
(d)	To approve and adopt Financial Regulations The Council reviewed Financial Regulations and they were unanimously adopted.																																													
(e)	To approve the Standards and Code of Conduct for Members The Council reviewed Standards and Code of Conduct for Members and they were unanimously adopted.																																													
(f)	To review and approve the Councils Policies and Procedures, including the adoption of General Power of Competence The Council had reviewed all Policies and Procedures, and they were all unanimously adopted. The Parish Council also reviewed the status of the General Powers of Competence, and this was adopted for unanimously.																																													
(g)	Internal Audit Report 2025/26 to be accepted and approved The Parish Council had reviewed the Internal Audit Report for the 2025/26 and no matters had been raised. The report was therefore approved unanimously with no action needed.																																													
(h)	AGAR 25/26: External Audit Certificate of Exemption to be approved The AGAR 25/26 External Audit Certificate of Exemption was reviewed and approved unanimously. The Chairmans of the Council duly signed the certificate along with the Responsible Finance Officer. Motion carried.																																													
(i)	AGAR 25/26: Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 to be approved The AGAR 25/26 Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 was reviewed and approved unanimously. The Chairman of the Council duly signed the statement along with Clerk. Motion carried.																																													
(j)	AGAR 25/26: Accounting Statements 2025/6 to be approved The AGAR 25/26 Accounting Statement 2025/26 was reviewed and approved unanimously. The Chairman of the Council duly signed the statement alongside the Responsible Finance Officer. Motion carried.																																													
(k)	Appointment of Internal Auditor 2026/27 The Parish Council unanimously approved to appoint S & J Accounting for the 2026/27 financial year. Motion carried.																																													
<b>010526/12</b>	<b>Planning</b>																																													
(a)	To receive planning application decisions and tree works: 26/00159/FUL 101 High Street, Stetchworth - <b>withdrawn</b> Two storey extension and alterations The Parish Council had no objection to the application.																																													
(b)	To consider planning applications received: None																																													
<b>010526/13</b>	<b>Date of Next Meeting &amp; Matters for Future Consideration</b> Next meeting 9 <sup>th</sup> July 2026 7pm																																													

Meeting closed 20.12

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**K Peck**  
**Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer**  
**Stetchworth Parish Council**

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**W Bell**  
**Chair**  
**Stetchworth Parish Council**

**Dated:** to be signed at the next meeting of the Parish Council on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2026 – in draft format until this time

## CLLR JONNY EDGE – 2025-26 Annual Report

County councillor for the Woodditton division

(including: Ashley, Bottisham, Brinkley, Burrough Green, Cheveley, Dullingham, Kirtling & Upend, Lode, Stetchworth, Swaffham Bulbeck, Westley Waterless and Woodditton (including Saxon Street))

### Introduction

This is my first annual report as an elected councillor. My first year in politics has been a learning curve, a lot of hard work alongside my day-job, but very rewarding. It has been a joy to get to know my 12 parish councils and as many residents as possible. It is helping to resolve problems for individuals and the community that I find so rewarding.

Local elections took place for all 61 seats on Cambridgeshire County Council on Thursday 1 May 2025. The table below shows the current composition of the Council compared to the election results in May 2021, and to this time last year.

	2021	2025	Now
Conservatives	28	10	10
Liberal Democrats	20	31	32
Labour	9	5	5
Independent	4	2	1
Reform	0	10	8
Green	0	3	3
Non-aligned	0	0	2

Since the election, the Liberal Democrats and Independents have formed a Liberal Democrat and Independent Group and one of the Independents has subsequently become a member of the Liberal Democrats.

### 1 The Council

**1.1** The Liberal Democrat and Independent Group now run the Council. Our vision is to create a healthy, fair and sustainable Cambridgeshire.

**1.2** I am Vice Chair of the Children and Young People's Committee. This is an area of the council responsible for the largest budget and with a huge amount of responsibility, not only for education and child development, but also for children and young people that are in our care as Corporate Parents.

I also sit on the Highways and Transport Committee, which is a great opportunity not only to make sure our area is being listened to, but rural communities across the county.

In addition, I sit on various associated and external boards and working groups, the newest established being Cambridgeshire's Culture Board and the St Edmunds Line (Cambridge to Ipswich) Community Rail Partnership Board.

**1.3** The Council has considered motions and issues put forward by councillors for debate. These include opposing any plans to merge our local police force into a larger and more remote body; GP services for growing communities; and the importance of flood prevention in the Fens.

In September I seconded a motion on the need to provide better support for people in mental health crisis or at suicide risk. This motion was close to my heart personally, but also in dedication to the son of local residents that have helped me understand the ongoing battle of families not wanting others to go through the traumas those suffering and their families must contend with. Mental health is beginning to get the status it requires but is still too far behind the curve in most settings. Attending the 1<sup>st</sup> conference of the Cambridge Children's Hospital more recently gave me hope that the medical profession is recognising this and wanting to handle mental health on parity with physical health and ongoing research.

### 2 Strategy Resources & Performance

**2.1** The Council set its budget in February 2026, including record spending on roads, thousands of extra school places, and support for vulnerable residents.

The budget included an additional £20 million for highway maintenance, delivery of the council's climate change and environment strategy, and £11 million to upgrade household recycling centres at Milton and March.

£14.7 million of additional funding was allocated for adult social care providers to help them manage rising costs and ensure care workers are paid the Real Living Wage, improving stability and quality for those who depend on care workers for their support.

The council are ensuring provision of holiday meal vouchers will continue until the end of summer 2026 for those children currently eligible for free school meals, despite closing the fund at the end of March that paid for most of this. The Government's replacement Crisis and Resilience Fund is less generous than its predecessor and is intended to provide a wide range of anti-poverty measures in addition to feeding children in struggling families.

There will be 3,500 new primary school places, and £72 million over five years to increase secondary school places. There will also be continued funding for the Families First early intervention programme that helps keep more families together. And more than £1.2 million will be invested in libraries and archives over the next two years.

**2.2** The council ran its third annual Quality of Life survey in 2025, which provides valuable insights into residents' perspectives and priorities.

5,500 residents (1,100 in each district) were directly polled for their views, and the survey was open in the summer for any other resident who wished to complete it.

**2.3** Like almost every county and unitary council, the Council increased its portion of council tax by 4.99 % in total; 2% for adult social care, and 2.99% for general spending.

### 3 Adults and Health

**3.1** The Adults and Health Committee have a significant role in ensuring that health inequalities are reduced, and that people enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support suited to their needs.

One of the first decisions of the new 2025 Liberal Democrat administration was to split the committee into two committees: one for its public health, adult social care and procurement responsibilities, and the other dedicated to the council's role in scrutinising local

NHS services.

**3.2** The council's adult social care services were rated as Good by the Care Quality Commission in summer last year.

**3.3** This has been a turbulent time for the Integrated Care Boards (ICBs). ICBs are statutory NHS organisations in England responsible for planning and buying healthcare services for local populations. They replaced Clinical Commissioning Groups in 2022.

Last year the Government required enormous in-year and ongoing savings to be made by ICBs. This has resulted in mergers of many ICBs as a way of cutting jobs. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, instead of having its own ICB, is now part of NHS Central East, covering Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Bedfordshire, Luton, Milton Keynes and Hertfordshire.

**3.4** The new Health Scrutiny Committee has held meetings where they have heard from various health providers and had the opportunity to ask searching questions. Subjects considered by the Committee have included dentistry, primary care and GP services, and services for children and young people with autism.

**3.5** The future of the Arthur Rank Hospice in Cambridge remains uncertain, after the NHS Trust withdrew over £800,000 of support. A private donation has enabled it to continue for a further year.

#### **4 Assets and Procurement**

**4.1** The County Council's Assets and Procurement Committee has agreed a partnership with developer Prologis to support the future expansion of Cambridge Biomedical Campus.

**4.2** The council's Shareholder Sub-Committee approved an updated business plan from the council's wholly owned company This Land.

The current council administration has worked extremely hard to stabilise the company, transforming it from the way it had been set up ten years ago under Conservative control.

The updated business plan enables the company to repay interest, reduce the amounts owed to the council, and limit the council's exposure to risk from the company.

#### **5 Children and Young People**

**5.1** Like most county councils, Cambridgeshire continues to experience huge financial pressures associated with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and with the costs of home to school transport.

The number of children in Cambridgeshire with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) has grown by 71% between 2020 and 2025. The council invested an additional £780,000 in the autumn to increase capacity to process these plans.

At the beginning of March, the Government released their Schools White Paper. This showing us a potential pathway to improvements in SEND through a more inclusive education framework, one that aligns with our ambitions in Cambridgeshire. Aligned to this paper is the opportunity for the council to receive funding to pay off 90% of the substantial high-needs deficit that has been hanging over our heads and building for so long.

Later in March we had confirmation The Department for Education will be delivering two new special schools in the county, in Gamlingay and March, with 270 new special school places.

**5.2** Cambridgeshire County Council's services for care leavers have improved since 2024, according to an Ofsted visit in July 2025. They also listed four areas for further improvement.

**5.3** In July I was delighted to be join Cllrs Lorna Dupre and Anna Bradnam at the council's Children in Care Celebration and Awards at Inflatebounce in Wyton.

At the end of October, I attended the Care Leavers celebrations in Cambridge to support the amazing young adults that have had to overcome a lot in their early lives, and those that support them so well.

**5.4** A new Community outreach service from the council aims to support and develop the skills of parents and children from birth to five years, and of those leading community groups for families with children from nought to five.

#### **6 COSMIC**

**6.1** COSMIC (Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee) has continued to oversee support for people experiencing immediate financial hardship. An increasing number of families are struggling financially at the moment.

**6.2** One urgent issue is the sudden spike in the price of domestic heating oil resulting from President Trump's war in Iran. The council has received £708,000 from the Government which is ring-fenced to support households struggling with this. The money has been added to the council's Crisis & Resilience Fund, and applications (for up to £400 per household) are being administered by the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation. Eligibility for this fund is currently restricted to those on specific means-tested benefits. If the Government's grant were to be shared equally among every household in the county reliant on oil heating, each household would receive less than £27.50; the council is having to make difficult decisions about priorities.

**6.3** The committee has procured an IT system which will enable more systematic and earlier identification of low-income households which would benefit from support. South Cambridgeshire District Council has been using this system for a couple of years now, with remarkable results.

**6.4** Work is under way to implement the recommendations of Cambridgeshire's Poverty Strategy Commission. These are grouped into six themes: income maximisation, digital inclusion, rural poverty, housing and homelessness, children and families, and mental health.

**6.5** Adult learning services in Cambridgeshire were given a 'Good' rating by Ofsted in spring 2025, with the behaviour and attitude of learners judged to be Outstanding.

#### **7 Environment**

**7.1** Water scarcity and water management is a key issue for Cambridgeshire. Water Resources East is responsible for producing a regional water resources plan for Eastern England, with a combination of infrastructure investment and demand management.

Meanwhile, the Fens2100+ project, which brings together agencies to develop a long-term plan to manage future flood risk in the Fens, has published a suite of reports including a Case for Change, Partnership Action Plan, and summary baseline report. The move of Anglian Water's wastewater treatment plant from northeast Cambridge to Horningsea was thwarted after the Government removed the necessary funding.

**7.2** Community watercourse grants are available from the council to support communities where the condition of local watercourses is increasing the risk of flooding. These can be used for clearance and maintenance, equipment hires, contractor support, or training and safety equipment.

**7.3** Cambridgeshire County Council is calling on residents to play an active role in restoring local nature as part of the 'Nature Recovery - From the Ground Up' project; a new initiative supporting parishes and community groups to design their own Community Nature Recovery Plans.

The first phase of the project runs from July 2025 to March 2027, focusing on Cambridge and twenty parishes across East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire, and South Cambridgeshire. Other parishes are invited to use the project resources and mapping software, and to register interest for future phases of the project.

**7.4** Cambridgeshire County Council has been ranked by Climate Emergency UK as one of the top performing councils in the country for the action it has taken towards Net Zero.

**7.5** Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership (RECAP) is urging residents to recycle batteries and battery-powered electricals safely, following an increase in fires caused by incorrectly disposed-of lithium-ion batteries. Across the UK, over 1,200 waste-related fires were recorded last year, a 71% rise since 2022.

## **8 Highways and Transport**

**8.1** The condition of our roads and pavements deteriorated rapidly over the winter. Highways and Transport Committee chair Cllr Alex Beckett has written a very informative explainer article at [notesfromalex.substack.com/p/why-are-the-roads-so-bad-right-now](https://notesfromalex.substack.com/p/why-are-the-roads-so-bad-right-now)

**8.2** The council continues to add more funding to its road maintenance budget, as the funding from Government via the Combined Authority is completely insufficient.

Around 35,000 permits are being issued annually in Cambridgeshire for work on the highway, and in addition works are undertaken that do not require a permit.

Our peat soil roads are a major problem, taking four or five times as much money to repair as regular roads. St Neots and Mid Cambridgeshire MP Ian Sollom asked a question about this in parliament.

The drove ways in the north of our division are soil affected and some are becoming a greater concern need pressing over the coming few years until we see improvements.

**8.3** The division has done well this year from the capital maintenance budget. We already have new surfaces to roads in Kirtling and the London Road from Newmarket to Six Mile Bottom. Still to come this year is surface treatment to the B1063 between Newmarket and the Suffolk border heading towards Ousden, as well as the B1061 on the edge of Dullingham which is now set to receive a more robust surface, following campaigning by myself and local residents raising ongoing concerns about this location.

**8.4** There was yet another review of highways staffing and in September a new Highways Maintenance Officer, Catriona, started who is proving to be very effective.

A new highways Asset Management System, Aurora, also went live in September, enabling better report handling, workflow handling, and performance oversight.

**8.5** New LED streetlights are being installed across the county at a rate of about 2,000 per month. Over 47,000 lights will see the new components fitted, with the aim of reducing the council's energy use by one-third.

**8.6** Far too many fatalities are being reported on Cambridgeshire roads at present, particularly involving young motorcyclists.

**8.7** The council is getting tough on utilities and developers who overstay their permits to work on the highway or fail to abide by the conditions of their permits. In 2024/25 the council issued fines totalling £483,000.

**8.8** Bottisham was successful in being the first in the Woodditton division to have a 20mph scheme approved. This has passed public consultation and is set to be installed later this year.

There have been delays to the delivery of projects from the 2024/25 Local Highways Improvement (LHI) projects, but Bottisham, Brinkley, Burrough Green, Lode and Kirtling have all recently or a shortly scheduled to receive delivery of their planned improvements.

Cheveley, Dullingham and Swaffham Bulbeck had LHI projects approved in the 2025/26 programme and many more have submitted applications that I will support through feasibility for 2026/27. Ashley, Bottisham, Burrough Green, Cheveley, Swaffham Bulbeck, Westley Waterless and Woodditton.

**8.9** Over the coming year, I had planned to emphasise the importance of reporting issues with the quality of our pavements. Unfortunately, the pertinence of this has recently been highlighted by two separate serious incidents in Swaffham Bulbeck. Upcoming newsletters will offer more clarity around how we can work together to improve this.

**8.10** More information about the council's highways work can be found at [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transparency](https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transparency)

## **9 Combined Authority**

**9.1** Work is ongoing on options for bus franchising, with an update due in June. Meanwhile, thirty-five bus routes in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, are hanging by a thread as the Mayor seeks to cut half a million pounds from local bus services. The County Council had to contribute funding to keep the young people's Tiger Pass going until March 2027.

The successful introduction of the T4 (Newmarket to Addenbrookes) and T5 (Soham to Cambridge) in the northern section of the Woodditton division have been welcomed. Bus services in the southern section of the division remain very limited and in need of improvement.

**9.2** The Combined Authority produced a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Cambridgeshire during the year. It is now working on projects including an employment strategy for young people not in education, employment or training; accreditation as a Local Visitor Economy Partnership; and a small trial to install channels in pavements to carry cables for on-street charging of electric vehicles.

## **10. Council reorganisation**

Far too much time this year has been taken up with the Government's plan to abolish district and county councils and replace them with all-purpose unitary authorities.

Four options for different ways of carving up our area submitted by local councils, were publicly consulted on in February and March. We expect to hear this summer what the Government decide for the future of our area. The County Council submitted 'Option A' which would join East Cambridgeshire, Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire in one council, and Peterborough, Fenland and Huntingdonshire in another.

Most parish councils across Woodditton and Burwell worked together to write to ministers with a strong case for 'Option A' and why if the Government decide to proceed with an alternative, our area must be aligned with Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire.

This received support from neighbouring parishes in South Cambridgeshire, and we can only hope it has the desired effect.

**11 Finally**

My thanks to the clerks and parish councillors of the 12 parishes in the Woodditton division, and the many community organisations, whose hard work helps keep our communities together.

Please do continue to contact me by email or phone should you require any support.

*Cllr Jonny Edge, 07974 348141, [jonny.edge@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:jonny.edge@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)*

Draft

## East Cambridgeshire District Council Report – Stetchworth Annual Report May 2025

### **Council Reorganisation**

The Council opted for the option joining with Peterborough, Fenland and Huntingdonshire based on the economic benefit for residents.

The final decision is expected from Government in July 2026 but based on the recent announcements, there is no clarity as to what Government will announce.

### **Buses**

We are still awaiting the outcome from the franchising decision made by the previous mayor.

Parts of the bus network are unsustainable from a budgetary viewpoint

The extra services promised as part of the precept increase in 2024, namely the Tiger 4 and Tiger 5 commenced during the summer of 2025.

There are additional services under review to replace the 901/2/3/4, which go through the villages, but we await the details, which will go out for consultation.

### **Kingsway Solar**

Kingsway Solar is a proposed 3,700-acre solar farm, which will encircle West Wrattling and Weston Colville, whilst taking the resulting electricity ten miles on pylons across the countryside to the Burwell substation.

I spoke as the local member at the Environment & Green Investment Committee at County Council to express my concerns about the proposed application.

The application is in totally the wrong position, and I will continue to push for a decision that thinks about residents rather than those of opportunistic applicants.

We await the formal application.

### **Waste Services**

The system of collection will change from June 2026 to a four-bin system of different sizes.

Part of this has been determined by Government legislation, which demands that general waste is put in a bin, rather than the bag system that ECDC uses and the weekly collection of food waste, which currently goes into the green bin.

The rollout of the new bins is currently happening.

### **Council Tax – Nil Increase**

For the thirteenth year running, the ECDC portion of the Council tax bill has been frozen and this is managed with no external borrowing, which is a testament to the way that the Council's finances are managed.

### **Planning**

The planning team have had a year of challenges, with some staff leaving.

The increase in battery storage facilities and solar farm applications, is causing a considerable amount of concern, when considered with the changing rules emanating from Government.

### **East Cambs Trading Company (ECTC)**

The wholly owned trading company (ECTC) continues to perform to a high standard.

The grounds maintenance team continues to win new contracts and win those not just on price, but on service.

Ely Market continues to thrive with a waiting list of traders wanting to join it.

Palace Green Homes continues to build good quality homes, including £100k homes and a good percentage of affordable homes, whilst contributing back over £6m in saved costs to the council over the life of the Company.

### **Bereavement Centre**

The decision made by the Council to build a Bereavement Centre near Mepal is coming close to fruition.

I visited the site on 25<sup>th</sup> April, and the buildings are coming on well, ready to be fully operational in September 2026.

This facility will provide a new purpose-built centre as well as adding to the income of the Council, building on the already existing profitability and service provision of the Council's trading company.

Alan Sharp