

# Cllrs Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip

## MONTHLY REPORT OCTOBER 2025

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### LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The political leadership of East Cambridgeshire District Council has now launched a campaign in favour of Option B, with East Cambridgeshire along with Huntingdonshire and Fenland being run from Peterborough. Neither Peterborough nor Huntingdonshire is supporting this option.

If, like us, you believe it will be deeply damaging to East Cambridgeshire to cut off our influence over the places where we work, study, and receive health care, and to be run from a city miles away with which most of us have no connection, please respond to their survey at <https://tinyurl.com/eastcambs-lgr-survey>

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### FULL COUNCIL MEETING

A long Full Council meeting on 18 September.

1. Local Government Reorganisation: we proposed an amendment which would have required the council to work on Option A (East Cambs with Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire) as well as Option B; and to engage with residents to establish their views. This was defeated.
2. Council Tax: we opposed a Conservative motion which claimed that the Government was considering allowing councils to set their own council tax bands and rates—because it isn't. The motion was passed.
3. New Homes Ombudsman: we proposed that the council should require its Trading Company to join the scheme which gives people moving into new build homes the right to take complaints to the New Homes Ombudsman. This was rejected by the Conservatives, on the grounds that it wasn't compulsory, and that the Trading Company had joined an inferior scheme which didn't give access to the Ombudsman.
4. Ely junction: we proposed that the council should continue to press the Government to invest in upgrades to the rail network north of Ely, to open it up to more rail journeys for passengers and freight. This at least the Conservatives could agree with.
5. Appointment of Finance Director: we abstained on the appointment of this key post, on the grounds that we had not been involved in the (very limited) process, and didn't know the applicants. This is one of the three key posts in the council, on which all councillors should be able to rely. The appointment process was woefully inadequate.
6. Chief Executive appointment panel: we argued unsuccessfully for a better process to fill this post, one of the other three posts. We therefore voted against the recommendations—more below.

7. Corporate Plan: we made our usual observation that this was a work of fiction. (The plans for the £13M crematorium at Mepal were developed in secret for eighteen months without being in the plan. If a £13M project is hidden from the council's plan, what value can we attach to the rest of it?) There were some elements in it we could support, such as the inclusive play project we initiated, and the need for a crossing at the A10 BP roundabout. But we pointed out that four years ago, the Conservative group had promised an army of uniformed volunteer traffic wardens—that has now shrunk to, possibly, part-funding one PCSO.
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## **GARDEN CLOSE SUTTON REMOVAL OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

As we reported last month, this application for a variation to the planning consent for the new Garden Close development (25/00667/VARM) would remove all affordable housing from the plans. The application is scheduled to be determined by Friday 3 October. We have written to object as follows.

As district councillors for the Sutton ward, we write to object to the removal of the affordable housing on this scheme. The district council's Local Plan requires affordable housing on sites of more than ten dwellings, and this development should be making a contribution to local housing need in line with the Local Plan and as evidenced by Sutton Parish Council's Housing Needs Assessment by AECOM (2021). This assessment concludes:

'a household would need an income comfortably above the average (or a very large deposit) to qualify for a mortgage even for an entry-level home. Home ownership through the mainstream market is not an option for the majority of local people.' Affordable housing provides a potential accommodation solution for those that need to live in the village but are unable to access open market housing. The adopted Local Plan policy for affordable housing requires new developments, on sites of over ten houses, to provide a minimum of 30% of the total as housing that meets the 'affordable' definition.

We therefore request that the council refuse this application in line with its own Local Plan and the Sutton Neighbourhood Plan.

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## **CHIEF EXECUTIVE RETIREMENT AND REPLACEMENT**

East Cambridgeshire District Council chief executive John Hill will be retiring at the end of this year, and the council has set in motion plans to fill the vacancy.

We could not support these plans, as they invite internal applications only, with no terms of reference for the recruitment panel. It was (and is) also unclear

whether any external recruitment advice and support will be called upon, as is usual when recruiting a council chief executive.

We understand that it is difficult to recruit senior staff when the council is likely not to exist in three years' time, but this all seemed to us to be quite inadequate for a post commanding in excess of £135,000 a year plus benefits.

Lorna is one of the three members of the recruitment panel, which has a Conservative majority despite both groups being equal on the council.

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## **STREAMLINING INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING**

The Government is consulting on removing the requirement for statutory consultation as part of the process for determining large national infrastructure projects such as the solar farm at Sunnica, or the incinerator at Wisbech. This proposal is set out in Government's Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

This move will reduce the level of engagement with the community and councils that the developer is required to undertake before submitting their application. The consultation seeks input on the creation and content of guidance that could encourage developers to still undertake non-statutory consultation.

Councils will likely be expected to provide greater input at earlier stages, and to mobilise their services even faster than currently required. Communities may also look to councils even more to advise on the impacts of such applications and to represent their views.

This is an extensive consultation, with 48 questions in total. There is a general concern that the focus on purely non-statutory consultation, which at present is not mandatory, weakens any engagement and opportunity for councils to represent local communities or provide specialist technical input.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-streamlining-infrastructure-planning>

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## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING—A MISSED OPPORTUNITY**

Our group colleagues on the council's Finance & Assets Committee voted against plans to hand over £72,000 of affordable housing funds to East Cambs District Council's own company, East Cambs Trading Company, for use at Arbour Square Ely. The money came from developer contributions that must be used to create extra affordable housing. However, ECTC has already signed binding contracts to deliver all twenty-seven homes on this site as affordable housing for social rent.

Lib Dem councillors said this means the grant does not secure a single additional home—it simply gives taxpayers' money back to a Council-owned company that

has already committed to deliver the scheme. Local residents in housing need are being denied the extra homes this money should have provided.

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## **OPERATIONAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Mark is our group's Lead Member on this committee, which met on Monday 29 September.

- Mark asked about the council's recycling rate, which is lower for the last two quarters than the equivalent periods a year ago.
  - The council has admitted that on most days the street cleaning service operates below the minimum number of staff.
  - Mark noted that many residents had received duplicate or even triplicate letters about the forthcoming changes to the waste collection service, and that there were instances of two letters with different collection dates.
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## **POLICE SURVEY**

Cambridgeshire Constabulary have created a short survey to understand how people currently report crimes and how the police can improve the process. It only takes 10–15 minutes, and as a thank you, you'll have the chance to win a £100 shopping voucher in a prize draw.

[https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/CIR\\_Cambs\\_Constabulary/](https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/CIR_Cambs_Constabulary/)

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## **POUND LANE SUTTON**

We've received concerns about speeding traffic on Pound Lane in Sutton. Mark has raised this with the Parish Council to see whether agreement can be reached to locate a mobile vehicle-activated speed sign (MVAS) there.

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## **FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

- Tuesday 21 October: Audit Committee
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## **MEET YOUR COUNCILLORS**

We will be at Joy Bistro, 65 High Street, Sutton on Monday 6 October and Monday 3 November at 6:30-7:30PM. Between surgeries, residents can continue to contact us by email, Facebook, or phone.

### **Cllrs Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip**

District Councillors for the Sutton ward  
(Mepal, Sutton, Wentworth, and Witcham)